

POEMS OF
PERSONALITY
SECOND SERIES

REGINALD C. ROBBINS

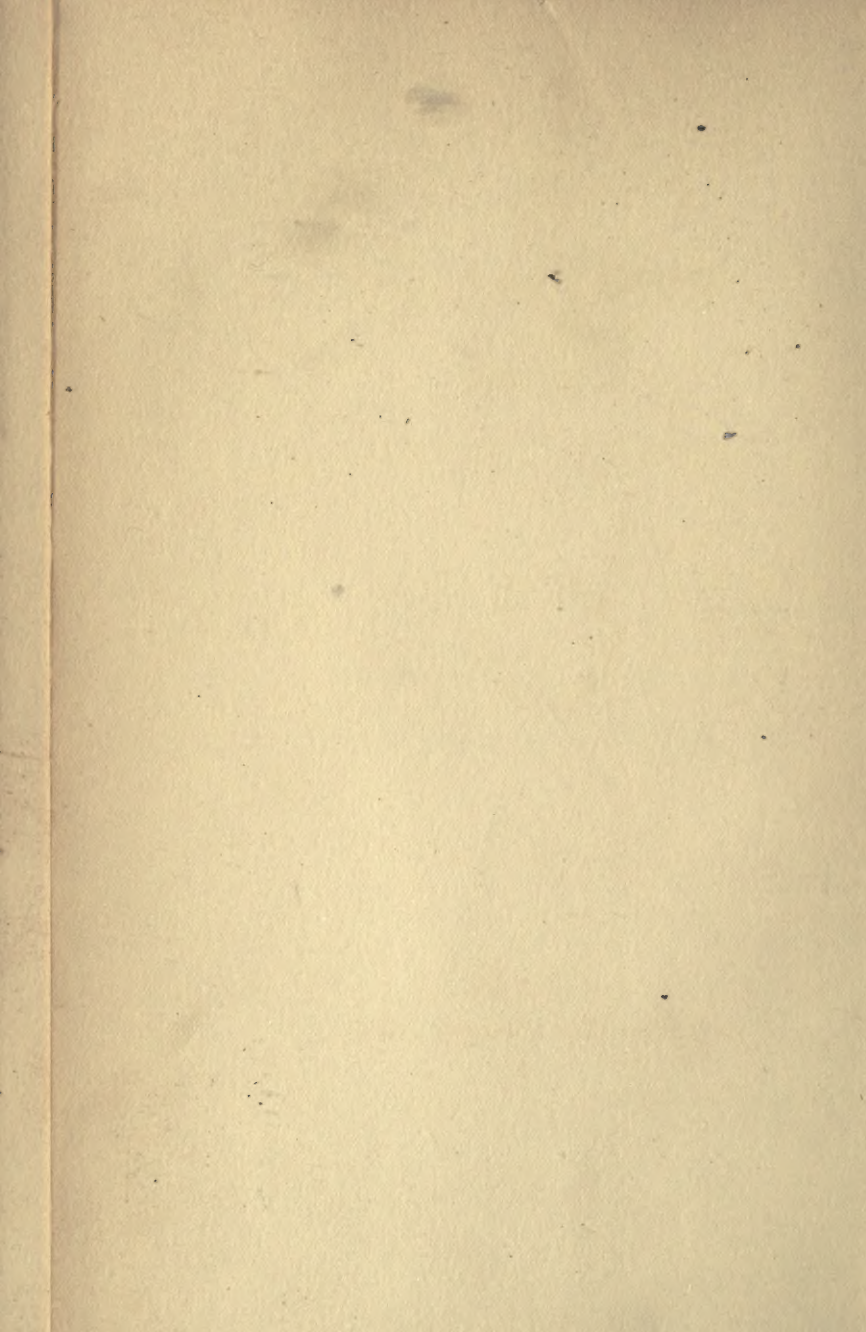




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OF
PERSONALITY

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REGINALD C. ROBBINS



— *“to speak beyond the book”*

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POEMS OF PERSONALITY

SECOND SERIES



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CONFUCIUS

ALACK! down from the Golden Years of Kings
Perfect in every enterprise of life
And Sages calm in benison of Shang-te,
Unto the turmoil of these latter days,
This modern-made forgetfulness of earth,
What lapse, degeneration! And the fall
Continues with the passing of the days;
And Princes lift the sword against their kind,
And none are Kings. And no superior man
Is counsellor; nor folk obedient
Anywhere bear in mind the Rule of Shun,
Nor guide their ways by the Proprieties,
Nor sacrifice by ceremonial
Exact, nor regulate by music-mood
Nor holy ode, conduct and character.
But all, both high and low, demand new modes
Of turmoil, new disorder; whilst this sun
Rises and sets, and stars upon their course
Move nightly, marking our disease and death.
I have made study of the Golden Years,
Their lore of order and their ways of worth
Perfect, plain-fashion'd; whence am well aware

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

How, might but men return unto those laws
Of firm obedience in both home and State,
Of wise command, submission questionless,
By king or husband, subject, yea, or wife,
Then might the rebel or the concubine
Garrulous, lustful, be unknown among us ;
And government be peaceful, taxes just,
And many sons be born to reverence
Both parents equally. Hence would I teach
This Middle Kingdom, centre of the skies,
With sure authority the method of them
Celestial, absolute ; that so might men
Re-live the ancient dignity of life,
And stand re-born as on the pristine earth
And be of Golden Years, or slaves or kings.
I am so fain to teach, yet nowhere find
Right opportunity ; but fear my faith
Will fade unheard when death o'ertaketh me
(My creed, of destiny too like mine own !)
And none after myself be bless'd to know —
For what disciple can preserve a truth
Without example in my private life
Which some successful government alone
Under my counsel could afford to him ? —

CONFUCIUS

None bless'd to know the truth establish'd by
The fair performance of the Golden Kings.

'Sooth, in these days of turbid insolence
When nought is order'd in authority,
But hearts are bruised and broken with despair
Of learning each some novelty to suit
The strain and stress of untoward circumstance,
Stands this my novelty and my despair
That nowhere men may heed the precept wise,
The proof irrefutable which I tell them
Glean'd of the wisdom of the greater age
Before all things grew old and tottering.
And I myself grow old and tottering
To leave no high example of success,
Who feel my very faith a failure here
Where few believe ; and I, alone of all
Wise in the sanction of authority,
Wield no authority — though yet, by grace
Of circumstance, set for the space of moons
Over this province-government to try
The fresh enforcement of the earlier ways.
Nor will this folk obey, nor will he heed
Whose counsellor by compact I became.

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

But all goes on from bad to worse by want
Of that antique respect and reverence
Which record of the wisdom-ways of Kings
Abundantly reveals, but is not now.
How shall I bear to go into my grave
A savior still unseen in public power,
A wealth of wisdom, doom'd as ignorance
To die and nevermore be known of men
By fair performance as of Golden Kings ?

Ah ! who could quench the fervor of our crime ?
Could Shun himself, fallen on latter days,
Have transform'd earth to heaven, made mankind,
Shang-te ?

Though every man perchance be good at heart,
Born good ; yet more than all the Sages' selves
Were needed to make perfect man born, both,
And bred to lust and greed by age mature.
As I believed and labor'd, so might Shun ;
And as I fail'd, so haply would Shun fail,
Whose faith, pride, wisdom were scarce more than mine !
Scarce more than mine ! And as Shun stands to-day
Criterion of perfection, so may I
To future ages, if no fault 's confess'd,

CONFUCIUS

Stand model and exemplar, teaching men
The way of me, Kung-fu-tze, as of them
The earlier Sages — ay, and serve mankind !
For where is opportunity to help,
There pride is justified ; and unto pride
With claim of self-success cleaves reverence ;
And where is reverence there all is saved ;
And saviorhood proves the superior man ! —
Yet from this pitiful experience
Of practical failure I perforce resign,
Throw down the staff of office and retire
To some sole hermitage to meditate
The better fortune of the Golden Days
When wisdom was, a better fortune proven
By mine experience of modern life
So purposeless without authority,
So warp'd and thwarted of accomplishment
For want of any ancient self-restraint
And plain obedience to command of Kings.
For where there is not any self-restraint
There nought is regulated ; and where nought
Is regulated there no government
Exists worth preservation ; and where earth
Is nowise govern'd no superior man

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Can safely intervene to found the State.
I shall abandon service publicly
And give myself to setting forth in script
The evils annall'd of their Springs, their Autumns,
Which are not years of singleness and truth.
By my book be I judged ; but be forgot
As conservator crazed who cried reform
Yet could not quench the fervor of our crime,
Could not bring back the Golden Years of Kings ! —

Was it not fault of mine, to strive beyond
All possibility of world-success ?
Was not crime mine that I defied our fate,
Sought to turn backward on earth's destiny
Which goeth ever onward though we fall ?
Which if we thwart we must deserve to fall ;
Which if we foster yields our life's success,
And thereby proves itself desirable,
More perfect than the Ceremonials
Of Shun, more sweet than old Proprieties ? —
Yet, be mine Annals as mine eloquence
Confident still of favor with the skies !

HERACLITUS

BEHOLD the world as man perceiveth it
(O world ! thou source of every thought of truth !)
Call'd fire, or water, earth or any name
For somewhat static, moveless, even though man
Himself be judge of it that flux be all !
Behold the world, as though perception might be
Some passive permanence, some plethora
Of recognition mutually inane,
Devoid of meaning, imperceptible
Because all-unimpressive ! Yet mine arm
Before mine eyes passeth from point to point
Athwart yon landscape (ay, o'er Ephesos,
Artemis' precinct !) ; and by motion proveth
A relativity dynamic 'twixt
My sight and world as, still within them both,
Its sweep impresseth alterance on the face
Of the world ; and by its passage o'er the world
Becomes unlike itself, mine arm no more
As erst, but arm and world at once made new
And by their novelty impressing on me
Flux, flux, and flux unto the end of time.
Why then denominate or world or water

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Or fire or earth or arm with any name
Intended to denote a permanence,
Implying some perception unimpress'd
And hence impossible ? Truth were not so.
And therefore fire and earth as men conceive them
Are not. But flux are all things that we know ;
And 'world' or 'life' names but the flux as whole.

The wonder is not, therefore, of the way
Life floweth and is absolved within itself
With every fresh desire — for how impress
Perception save by impact ; and how else
Might motion be, save by the alterance
Unending, irremediable of time ?
The wonder is not of the way we pass,
Are born and are forgotten with the dead.
Rather were alterance, the flux of change
World's axiom, and physics every way
(The Upward and the Downward Burning both)
Built in our understanding how we move
And breathe and face the morrow as we must.
Necessity, for flux. And what we know
For necessary ne'er bemarvelleth.
The wonder, rather, that we seem to stay ;

HERACLITUS

Are here, one moment ; there, at other while ;
'Stablish'd and resting as we somehow seem.
The wonder, so, that any element —
Or very fire, or water, or dull earth —
Remaineth very fire, water, earth,
And not another ; how each element
Seems untransmutive, hath identity
Whether it be or not-be, though each thing
Can neither be nor not-be, but (becoming !)
In some sort must amalgamate with each
And every other, as the law of all
Requires, whose fundament is alterance !
From this dilemma there were no appeal
To proof of gods. The gods (if gods there be !)
Either abiding still beyond space, time,
And sharing not in motion ; or otherwise
Being but motions of the myriad world
Call'd archetypal, alterance none the less !
And either way were they beyond appeal —
For, being unmotion'd, were they nought to point
This paradox of stillness seemingly ;
Or, being (as needs were, were they anywise !)
Themselves but movements of the world at large,
Were they but type and formula indeed

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Of this my proposition, not themselves
Solutions of the mighty mystery !
For how were Zeus, a motion, seeming Zeus
Through countless ages ; Artemis herself,
The symbol of life-lapse by local creed,
Continuously Artemis, nought else ?
Gods, elements or men, beasts, trees, or all
Alike, true chaos of unceasing flux,
Yet paradoxically Zeus, earth, fire,
Artemis, air, oak, Herakleitos, each !

Lo ! were it, by some possibility,
A bare necessity beyond escape
That somewhat, still unchanging, lurks within
The maelstrom of the fluxion ; gives a name
To each momentum ; that beyond the breath
Of birth-in-death affords identity
To recognition ? Were it, that I take
An hidden axiom and reluctantly
Accept a fundament occult till now ?
Urge I not every hour that what we see
For bare necessity were understood
Beyond necessity to understand ?
And prove I not both terms of axiom —

HERACLITUS

The status, as the fluxion — equally
Prime datum of the world wherein we move ?
The movement and the mover ! — Yet wherein
Were paradox precluded, that we say :
I move, Zeus moveth ; earth is earth ; and water
Water ; as fire, fire though it melt
And pass in every flickering ? How might Zeus
Be to his motion, I unto mine arm's
Translation show related, when ' itself '
Must be, as by hypothesis, without
Share in self-passage nor defined by change
Of relativity to all things else —
Though of itself nought if it may not move ?
And what of alterance then when passage-fact
Precludes intrinsic inference of aught
Moveless, unpassing ? If relation lie
In truth 'twixt state and state, and such we call
Motion ; yet what, within such mystic stream,
The very self-distinctiveness of flux
From each self-state as state, which cannot be
As state determinate of passingness
Which could demark it but impermanently
(Save passingness be endless emptiness !)
And so transform it into flux anew ?

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

If, as indeed I take the novel truth,
There be unceasingness within our flow
(Ha ! were it that very flow's unceasingness
Which by non-termination yields to each
Moment and aspect an enduringness
Inherent only for the fluxion's self
Its universalness of reference,
And cheats us with supposed identity
Of many moments joint-establishing !)
Whereby such fluxion shows distinctively
For alterance (requiring permanence
For standard and criterion !) — what, within
Such duplex datum of our universe,
Can thus, with appeal to any sanity,
Be said of such relationship as lies
'Twixt alterance and change-nonentity,
Whether itself were fluxional or no ?
And if itself 's shown static — what were then
Its own relationship, as status, toward
The primal fluxion — secondary crux
Interminably self-repetitive
In logic-regress beyond man's conceit ?
I pause before such paradox, whose terms
Now first confront me among sons of men,

HERACLITUS

Now first demand solution. Future years
Shall haply see solution ; haply find
The task impossible, to rectify
Such rift within Necessity, the One ! —

Yet not the same task, not such paradox
Precise as now appalls me among men
The first and therefore last, as all truths flow :
Necessity, but passingness writ large,
Like world without or pause or permanency
(So reason tells, interpreter of sense
In just perception of duplexity)
Save as we name it so, we know not wherefore,
And seize the simulacrum to explain
The shown reality — and call it Same,
Though unto every thought respectively
A different necessity-of-truth !
To none my same dilemma, though the name
Of Herakleitos' fluxion aye endure !
Some task made different by the lapse of time,
By newer information, newer needs
Of understanding truth-necessity,
Yet seeming-same within their universe
Of logic-wrought procedure : whereunto

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Shall many minds attain, for whom my fame
Means nought than early rumor, who shall stand
Confronting, seemingly as I confront
This paradox. And many shall attempt
Evasion, or delude with trickery.
For some shall say : The paradox disproves
All possibility of movement made —
For how can somewhat pass and yet be same ? —
Forgetful how this motion of my hand,
Though at each instant status in itself
(As we imagine instance cognizable !)
Yet passes, point to point, perceptibly,
And proves unto perception, truth's best judge,
This wonder-universe of earth, of water,
Fire and Ephesos within my sight,
Known thus for motion all though each bear name —
Known for perceivers each (not plethoræ
Of blank passivity !) beyond all doubt
Even as I (ha ! might the changeless I
Resolve all paradox, itself that knows
Continuously through the change of each
Perception, feeling on interminably
Beyond and through each moment, who can say ?),
Yea, even as I — and proving thus my life

HERACLITUS

Impression'd of a world. — And some shall cheat
Themselves, to doubt perception-reasoning
And base truth in denial ! Yet, O world,
Can any, sane, deny truth were of thee ?

ÆSCHYLUS

THEY murmur, then, that I (as they demur)
Unmask the Mysteries, declare to men
Matters beyond the scope of tragedy,
From speech taboo'd, perchance precluded from
Mere human understanding? Let them rail!
What garland could be grander on the brows
Of victory than this protestation? Who
Might flatter to the clouds this poetry,
As he who calls my name, forsooth, accursed
For blasphemy, revealing sacred things?
So much for them, the mob, who only praise
When most denouncing. Them I thank with scorn.

Them, too, I thank that they have subtlier still
Suggested to imagination much
Toward some yet greater work than they deplore!
Some vision of a gnarl'd protagonist
(As some bolt-stricken oak in Tempe's vale)
Prometheus-like, snatching from Zeus for men
The swift fire-secret, and for punishment
(Even as the oak by disembowelling)
Suffering vast maltreatment, though at soul

ÆSCHYLUS

But more confirm'd in mighty righteousness
By each injustice. Only let the mob
Threat but my life on Areopagos,
Torment me round with clamor — that my heart
Be wrath-inflamed to rigor — and I'll make
The master-piece: the Master-Hero Bound
Defiant and triumphant: Gods and all
Belittled by the unswerved suffering Man —
The suffering Man unswerved, the soul at last
Of tragedy and heart of holiest song
Triumphant by distress over all Gods!
The master-music: though the veil be rent;
And high Olympos, mere earth-mount at last,
Cast down Zeus' throne before the feet of men,
Doff every vestige of eternal snow —
And flower with thyme and honey; to the taste
Of every soul a liberation, though
Come sorrow with responsibility,
Come suffering with the fresh awakening:
The pain of parting from the father-care
Of God Olympian, seen at last in truth
A tyranny and nobly cast aside!
Such my Prometheus. — Let them rail at that
(Come Dionysia-season) an they will!

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

For me an inspiration ; and for them
Boar-baiting, bull-bewildering as with goads ;
Prometheus shall be : man exposing all
(The sacredest, most holily taboo'd,
The most mysterious) to the sight of man
And men's instruction ; that an holier truth
(That secret of the breast Promethean,
The doom of Zeus for all his tyranny !)
Rise from the ashes and establish us
In sacredness if not in mystery,
In consecration and an open heart.

And yet — might any Order be not Zeus,
He of the Law ? Is there a law beyond
Law's full impersonation ? And if such
There seem (those Moirai, dread Eumenides
Of myth), swells not the name and thought call'd Zeus
To fill the perfected requirement ?
Might I, save for some Areopagos
Protective from the momentary spite
Of mobs impulsive, with impunity
Assail the old-time myth-authorities ;
Save, as I say, for force conservative,
The middle-source of justice, tyrant still

ÆSCHYLUS

Over the reckless demos-novelty ?
Shall I be wrath demotic tearing down
All institution, when but Institute
Alone gives warrant of free thought and speech ?
Prometheus hath taken indeed a shape
Such as my wrathful mood against the mob
Of archaists impell'd, such as my right
To mouth deep-searching and wild-wingèd words
Demanded in assertion ; but shall mine
Half-misconception bide as Titan bound,
Binding mine art, cramping mine utterance still
To mere defiance and self-petulance
Protestive, when to act constructively,
Upbuilding and establishing, were best ;
And best were to abide with justice yet
Staunch partisan of Zeus, who, though he grow
A greater Zeus, were Areopagite
Still, an establish'd custom from the first ?
It is because I did accept the myth
Erroneously indicating Zeus
For interloper that I fail'd to feel
Futurity for his ; but now I see
The Zeus-succession but the Chronos-rule
From first, the Zeus-anticipation in

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The old pre-Titan forcefulness. And thus
Be there some reconciliation found
At last, some yielding of rigidity
(Even as the oak, shear'd of the lightning-blast,
May skyward rear anew some crown of green
And the blue shine down and be but heaven the more!);
Some Zeus-approximation of the man
Roused to a wider-eyed austerity
Of ripe world-insight recognizing doom
For just and pardon in humility ;
Some earth-approximation of the God,
Humaner by the conquest ! That my tongue
Shall sing the man's unbinding and his end
In stalwart service 'neath authority
As interceder for the human race :
The Fire-Bearer, Master-Foresight Freed —
Whose cult obtains throughout our Attika.

And thus shall this my trilogy enhance
The potency of that wise authority
Over Athenai exercised by them
On whose defence I must at last rely
For privilege to speak whilst speak I must !
Thus shall the Gods not unassisted sway

ÆSCHYLUS

Athenai's destinies, but by my song
Of songs renew authority outworn
Over the demos ; and these archaists,
Wholly unjustified of blasphemy,
Yet win by will of mine and with me stand
Leaders conservative to teach themselves
How truest reverence springs in freest thought,
In freest speech anent the truths of earth ;
The clear conviction (not the skeptic rant)
Found in most-revelation — trusting Zeus
To test of any searching, any proof ;
Nor veil'd in jugglery of dark taboo. —
'T is thus that I reveal the Mysteries,
Unmasking with my mask the sacred things !

PARMENIDES

ALTHOUGH mine Elea be a little town
Unlike Athenai, yet the wide world all
Is nowise larger than her atomy —
Not even Athenai, like although unlike :
This strange vast city whereto mine old-age
Hath come to wonder at her ways of men.
For, were aught other than another thing
(Or seas or men or cities equally),
Were then nonentity between their bounds
'Soe'er approximate though they might be.
And therefore in no rational intent
Can there be here Athenai, there afar
Elea, though the journey I have made —
Ah ! dogma blessèd to the wanderer
For whom an Elea, though a little town,
Is birthplace ; home-belovèd, being an hearth !
In sooth, Athenai is but still a town,
Yet of herself, so far as she hath truth
Of any being, is she as the world :
And I yet in that Elea, though I came
O'er leagues of purple ocean to be here,

PARMENIDES

And there no longer. Thus indeed I fail
Defeat the law of reason. In my heart
All is as Elea though I dwell not there,
Though if in space and time I seem at least
Here present. Elea was a little town ;
Yet in herself teacheth the truth of things !

How then explain the semblance that I came
Even from Elea to arrive at last
After such leagues of laboring overseas
In strange Athenai ? How indoctrinate
This contrast, to the clarity of truth ?
How reconcile this lorn nostalgia
Of him the old man wandering, lonelily
(I laughed at it in new-come colonists !),
Lost from his Elea toward yon agora ;
If that the Elea straining at his heart
Be proof that neither time nor space hath truth,
But all is still but Elea and the years
Of youth and wisdom and the praise of men ?
Perchance, indeed, that unity I preach
Were this of yearning, unforgetfulness,
Presence in very absence, if by pain
And loss in separation very real ?

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

And how acknowledge, how construct anew,
Such scheme of unity noetical
In face of opposition and defeat?
For here what waits me? That shrewd Sokrates
Whom no man can withstand, whose ruthless test
(So I have heard from friends who urge me to it)
Is soul-examination (as I now
Examine self perforce!) — he waits for me
Even in that agora to try my truth
By his new method (so unlike mine own
Before this hour), to examine me
(Himself a young man; beautiful, no doubt,
As every god-like intellect implies),
Alas — and find nostalgia writ large
Upon my spirit contradicting clean
The world's illusiveness to men of reason,
Elea's unity with all things here! —
How have I erst been wont to reason with
Some skeptical disciple; how, denounce
The counter-dogma of the Ephesian sage?
Let me rehearse, and reassure myself
Therewith, the folly of the counter-creed
Which Herakleitos foisted on the world,
The craze of contradiction! — How become

PARMENIDES

(How not-be in the moment that we seem ?)
When truth is, and is-not 's nonentity ? —

Ay, so oft-time the formula hath served
Whilst all was at the acme and the world
Was yet in fact but Elea unto me ;
And nought was known, save as by vague report,
Of league-on-league of weltering, or the sense
Of oceans intervening, or the sight
Of strangers cold-contain'd and arrogant,
Indifferent to Elea as to aught
Beyond their agora : themselves at home
As I in Elea ; their unity
With me, worst mockery ! Did Ephesos
Vomit her sage, a corpse, upon these streets
To gibber of death-throes and the charnel-house
(Dread proofs of scarce-illusive alterance !),
I were not more unnerved, shaken at soul,
To meet with Sokrates and speak with him.
I should have wiped away the universe
Consistently with qualities of sense,
To wean me of this Elea inwardly,
Before I undertook to cross the seas !
And is not Elea quality of sense ?

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Yet how maintain the doctrine, when at heart —
By this new method, self-examining,
Which omen-like forewarneth me of him —
Gnaweth a contradiction worse than death
Which will not as a ghost be laid away,
But as a Fury feasts upon my frame !
How can illusion warrant me these throes
Of yearning homewardly, whilst nevermore
Perchance shall any save the inward eye
Behold that Elea, town where I was born :
Which is not as Athenai ? — Ah, here comes
(With Zenon, my disciple, urging on)
A lout so ugly that I laugh at him —
Not Sokrates, surely ! I had never dream'd
A visitant so ludicrous. — Ah, well !
If there be any truth of Unity,
No Reason can be in a shape so crude,
So unlike Zenon or Parmenides,
So utterly unlike the wisdom-form
Of gracious balance, proud benignity !
None in mine Elea are so dull as this one,
Doubtless. Our Elea shall have victory !

PHIDIAS

THE Gods are working with me as I work ;
I, Pheidias, sculptor ; helpmate of the man
Perikles : maker of the homes of Gods,
These temples ; sponsor to the homes of men,
This town Athenai and Akropolis.
The Gods are working with me here on high
In air above Athenai, where the fane
Of Parthenon already rears around
The Form chryselephantine. Round the Form
Athena : virgin matron, patroness
Of the City-State, preceptress of the mind
Of man : concentrates all the orb of earth,
From Babylon to Aithiopia,
Cold Chersonesos or the Hesperides.
And very near around me and this Form
(Hid from my workshop only by these walls
Of Parthenon, and unto memory clear)
Lie glittering Ilissos, Lykabettos
Where Phoibos riseth in this summer-time,
And broad Hymettos with its dusky green.
And, closer yet (though whither wearying sun
Sinks to his rest), springs Areopagos

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Where weighty words still sway the destinies
Of life and death in matters of our State.
And yonder (through these walls I picture them
Sun-sparkling) lie Phaleron and the port
Peiraeus; and, though further westwardly,
The way Eleusis-ward (mysterious site,
Emblem of piety) along the plain
Between the hills and 'mid the almond-groves.
The world of human power or sacred hope
Alike concentrates with me and this Form.
Mine art embodies in the name of earth
(Material, practical, political :
As reverent) all that wisdom which, without
Athena for demonstration, were as breath
Too subtle for the senses, unlike earth
And therefore nought for men material,
Void as a chaos for our politic. —
There are who doubt them even of the Gods,
Holding the final truth mere fire or air.
Some few the hypercritical deny
Athena; and deserve the poison-cup
For State-corruption and seditioning.
And yet no poison-cup would still them quite,
No punishment which breeds a sympathy

PHIDIAS

Eradicate the sacrilegious rant ;
Only the clear conviction of mine art
As fundamental pedagogic fact
Embodying Godhood, giving unto men
Proof positive (practical, political :
As reverent) of a true divinity
Beyond all myth and legend. Let the myth
Elude belief — no piety need fear
To fall with that ! I turn and men shall turn
Unto Athena sculptured by my hand
Here in her temple on Akropolis —
And must believe. I work with my mere hand
As the man Perikles commanded me
To help to rear Athenai, fit abode
For Gods or men. But, whilst my chisel plies
And flakes of ivory plate leap in the light,
I know the Gods are Gods by virtue of
This beauty of chryselephantine Form. —
The Gods are working with me as I work. —

Completed ! — Truth perfected ; no stroke more
To make ? — Hand wearies and the chisel falls
In a moment cold and dull'd. And all were as
The Gods were not ; Athena were a doubt ;

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Athenai some ephemera ; and myself,
'Spoil'd of my body's power, suddenly
Widely awaked in mind, as skeptic too !
I, for the nonce as the young Sokrates ;
Strangely akin in new bewilderment
To Anaxagoras who makes of thought
The Gods' thin effigy in place of stone ;
Parmenides and their unholy rout
Who work no beauty, but disturb our faith
With pleading, counter-pleading of the case
Man had no right to enter against Gods —
Even though brought on Areopagos ! —
Against the Gods who only ask of men
Belief and piety and workfulness
Unto the archetypal truth of Form
Which cannot be of fire or thought or air !
Alas ! I suddenly, as Sokrates,
As any Eleatic anciently
(All alike, whatsoe'er the teaching, false
To any illustration outwardly
Of presence and proportion, ay, to art)
Question the clear conviction ; from my hand
Let fall with the cold tool my piety,
My loyalty to him, that Perikles ;

PHIDIAS

My serviceableness to City-State ! —
Serve I the State so truly then who carve
The solid semblance to persuade the world
Unto belief I fear may be but myth,
Myth only, and no universal truth ?
The chisel falls from the fingers ; cold and dull'd
It lies in the silvery flakes ; and with it lies
My spirit, vacant of divinity.
The Form still stands a form material,
Material only, meaningless anent
Truth archetypal. I have rear'd above
Athenai but some domicile of power
To tyrannize upon the souls of men ;
Some image born of force, projected of
Mine overweening blind credulity —
Ignorant of the nature of myself —
And Perikles' persuasion. Tyrants must
Conserve the Gods unto their own support ;
Delude the demos to mistake mere form,
The physical body, for what lies beyond
Physics : the fiction of the judging mind
(The mind, which ne'er were perfect nor complete,
But hath its being by some form-of-growth
And therefore cannot finish and lose faith

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

As now I fail of heart in finishing !),
Which weighs my sculpture unto aimlessness,
Denies it purpose and excuse to be
Save as it serve at worst some archetype
Of purpose formative not in the Form.
And any purpose, if the Gods but fall,
Condemns my huge Athena either way. —
I doubt me if there be in truth a God !
It is in truth as one or two have said,
Endanger'd for their wise temerity !
'T is true the mind is verily a form
Quite unlike matter (leaving matter nought
But inchoate formlessness — as now I sense
This Anaxagoras !) ; and the over-mind,
The formal mind of all, hath in it nought
Of frame material, but breath alone,
Fire or feeling, as the doctrine goes !
What then am I with this Athena's frame ?
A child, a plaything of this Perikles,
A prostitute to plans political,
A maker of impostures ! If as men
Our bodies be but clogs upon the soul,
But prisons of the spirit, as rumor saith,
Is there an art at all still worthy of

PHIDIAS

A man's endeavor ; when his every hope
Should be to rid his aspiration from
The deadweight of the tenement of clay ?
(The Eleusinians give some hint of this.)
The poets may be mightier than I
With all the crimes of their impieties ;
And but because they sing earth incomplete,
Life tragic and imperfect : Aischylos
Or Sophokles alike leaving a world
Which, beautiful but in-the-making, stands
Fit to be ever new, though Godlessly.
Philosophers may soon be born of men
Who, surer than the surest yet of them,
Shall yield irrefragable logic-form
To doctrines of their immaterial
Formative verity —and leave me here,
Me and my works with wreck of all the Gods,
An outgrown childhood, plaything thrown aside
Even with Athenai and Akropolis
While the world centres in some other sphere. —
The Gods are perfect, finish'd — with my work!
The Gods with me are weary, as I lie !

Ah ! but the Form chryselephantine — see,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Yon line unbeautiful : not modell'd quite
Unto the archetype I feel in me
(Unfinishable, imperfectible !),
The searching wisdom of the frame divine,
Itself at growth within me as I breathe
And move and have my being of its power,
Demanding imitation in the clay
Interminably to its modelling :
Which thus alone is anywise transfused.
One hour's brief laboring will set that right
(As near as man may e'er achieve an end
Which groweth in itself unendingly)
Eternally as no man than myself
(Not Polykleitos, he the strong and new),
Labor he ne'er so many, many days,
Might ever hope to render it correct ! —
What were the barren breath-mentality,
The truth of air or fire, were not we men
Of frame material and with our hands
Laborers to embody the divine,
If only point by point interminably,
In archetypal and enduring fact ?
We are the children of the Gods indeed ;
Our works are playthings of divinity ;

PHIDIAS

Perikles, sponsor to Olympos here ;
And I by inspiration fitted toward
This rectification of humanity.
The beauty of the body : it is man's truth,
Whereunto each high thought, though thin as air,
Nurtureth and approximates the frame
Of every man of men in some degree.
What though the beauty grow elusivewise
Beyond our labor, even with each high thought
That stimulates the sense to self-defeat ?
We can still labor, winning truth in work
So long as work is to us. — Whence I feel
I have won beauty by this victory now
Over impiety ; can grasp this tool
Anew to more assured dexterity
Toward absolute proportion and design.
The work were finish'd never, though we fail
And cease. The hope eternal is through all :
Wisdom, the maid Athena, matron o'er
The glittering city on Akropolis.
The Gods leap with me to my feet afresh,
Stoop as I stoop, and grasp the keen-edged tool !

EURIPIDES

WE are but human, and the human fume
Of crime and passion reeks within the brain
Pathetic, tragic, beautiful by proof
Indeed of incompleteness and the need
Of 'Gods' and 'Law' to make intelligent
The stultification. We indeed are men;
But by our partial manhood must imply
An over-humanhood, a 'God' o'er all.
And therefore doth the Godhood through our griefs
Gleam forth and render radiant the scene
Of daily anguish and the agony
Of incompleteness to these minds and hearts
That feel a oneness deeper than the dreams
Of love, a wider heritage than hate,
Yet spend by doom our force in lust and wrath.
But therefore are our passions and our shames
Sources of noble wonder, of dismay,
May be, but of an high tranquillity,
Of speculation through infinitude.
On, therefore! be the tragedy infused
With present limitation, let the theme
Lift itself not beyond the ways and words

EURIPIDES

Of poor humanity, that through those ways
Be teaching subtler, surer than the mode
Of dream archaic, than the dignity
Of great discourse without the throb of blood,
Yea, than this Sophokles' serenity
(His, who 'd ascribe unto unmoral Gods
The fiat that absolves mere man from blame!),
Scornful of sin, ignorant of remorse :
Remorse, self-blight of insufficiency ! —
Medeia ! be thou mad amongst thine own,
Slayer of thy self-seed in blind despair
To spite world's huge injustice : that all men
May shrink and shudder, take the truth to soul,
And so learn of themselves, achieve the law
Of self-distrust and be, beyond all Gods
(The Gods, but men impractical, inane !),
Efficient by the moderation ; through
The rule of self-restraint, all-powerful !

Another (in this hesitation now),
Another than myself (this Sophokles ?)
Had fallen on recantation, writ the Fates
Large over this Medeian manuscript ;
And lost the tragic conscience out of all.

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

He had implied some vast ship-enginery
Whereof my murderess was but some beam,
Some wavering mast, at most some straining cord
Unwitting of the wallow and the gale
That drove her, her the blameless ministrant
Of powers beyond the ken of human soul ;
And thus had saved her through self-ignorance
And allegation of a truth-unknown :
Strange contradiction ! Stranger paradox
Yet, that I, by admission of her guilt
Self-known and self-compell'd, have given to man
Self-mastery by failure self-imposed ;
Omniscience by denial of a law
Beyond ourselves : as we are source of law
In high internal conflict ; in ourselves
Peace-recompensed by loss of our peace all ! —
It is a truth new-earn'd : as this my soul
Is new and earns (as all this Age must earn !)
A fresh-form'd understanding. Here we stand,
Athenai fronted by the worst of wars,
Which unto any man sane and aware
Must spell in the end disaster : haply then
The ruin of our great god-founded State.
And what shall then remain unless the soul

EURIPIDES

Be its own theatre, and the choral ode
Of deep endurance 'neath the ruin'd rule
Of a world undone rise as the pæan now
Sounds in the stillness of an Attic sky
Above the breathing of the hearkening throng?
For I foresee the ruin of this world
Of Perikles and proud Aspasia
At hands of Lakedaimons, Dorian clods
Who only by their heritage of tune
(Longtime transferr'd unto our choristers)
Are better than the brutes or have in them
The sweet self-gratulation of an art.
But therefore stand we all confronted now
With opportunity: to base our hope,
Not in the unknown God-imaginings
Which with Athenai ruin finally
But, in the self-known ruin wherethrough we too,
Though slaughtering these children of our brain
And heart and soul, though casting unto dogs
These gems of tragic purport, yet shall offer
Ourselves unto the world forever proven
Of purport tragic though the Gods are nought.
And thus I face the future cataclysm
With my Medeia warning all mankind —

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

These people of Athenai who must wake
To find the Fates within us and our theme
Of beauty born anew with every man
Or high or low who knows within himself
The order'd conflict conscientiously.
This we must know who soon must slay with
hands

Our offspring : else shall we be, Spartan-like,
Lost to ourselves forever, with the fall
Of Gods and heroes as the Long Walls fall.
I prophesy ; and seek to leave with life
Example of the strength within the soul,
Which, though it yield to savage hate, inspires
The truth with self-nobility, and lives ! —

Enough for life, though it inflict a death
Ennobling in itself the shame and sin ;
Enough for this Athenai which with throes
Shall fall and fling to ruin Tragedy :
Athenai, beautiful if only fill'd
With passion of self-knowledge whilst it slays.
What, too, of death, if Attika must die
Even as Alkestis, yielding all herself :
That world, the wider if less worthy State,

EURIPIDES

May linger past the life or death of these ?
What was Alkestis when I wrote of her ?
A something new unto the sight of man ?
A fond return to life forevermore
By virtue of the death vicarious ?
And shall some wrestling with the spirit of death,
Some soul-of-perishing that saves all things,
Renew for all-time this Athenai too,
If perishing but with the conscious wish
That world shall pass to some more-worthiness
Over, beyond anything She hath known ?
I pause before the threshold of the thought —
I, herald of new eras unto men
Of pure self-knowledge though Medeia slay
And death ensue unto the very soul ;
Of knowledge purified and endless life
By virtue of Alkestis, the new thought
Of self-devotion unto death achieving,
Not by some Fate but ever beyond Fate, —
Identifying wisdom with the selfhood
Of all things known though these be not of
self —
A victory o'er death and endless life.
Euripides hath enter'd on the stage,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

And, though he pass, shall leave the tragic world
Not as before, but human holily ;
More faith-felt by avoidance of all creed ;
And thus involving Godliness through all.

SOCRATES

WHETHER it be the voice oracular,
Possession demoniacal ; or no ?
Whether the prompting force infallible
Be inspiration ? — Let me meet myself
Abroad as in some spirit-agora,
Stand face to face with me, greet me and
pause

Self-disputatious ; holding dialogue
Silent, alone within the mind of me
To clear the question of equivocacy ;
Determining, defining mine own terms
The trulier to understand the point,
This question of divinity in me,
The source of insight and intelligence
Where reason fails. Ay, let me reason of it
As with those casual acquaintances
Or pupils, forcing freely from my soul
Her premises, her preassumptive truths
Wherewith, by interplay of stimuli
In logic dialectical, to prove
Some ultimate position tenable

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Anent the deity within the man :
Whether mine ignorance be sibylline !

The power of reason and its limit in me ?
Man holds opinion, goes abroad to meet
His fellow, finds within the counter-man
Counter-opinion ; sets to reason with him
(As I with me myself in singleness)
Each against each ; and reaches at the last
Some third opinion, fruit of all that toil.
Grant me, the third opinion is the best,
Compounded of the two now both disproved
(Light born of darkness, truth of two untruths —
Small satisfaction !), and that at the last
Both disputants maintain it, each in sort,
Though haply with no final sympathy.
Part then these two, and go their different ways
Out through our agora. Each meets anew
Some disputant and sets to reason with him.
Then from the three fresh-provable untruths
Arise two truths, not in themselves alike,
Being compounded of three lies distinct
In various combination, which go forth
Into the world, forever losing truth

SOCRATES

By fresh compounding, never to the end
Wholly alike (nay, unlike more and more ?),
Yet each true to the soul that sweareth it,
And all (as many as there may be men ?)
Of equal-seeming self-authority !
So to our reasoning is never rest ;
So to our truth come echoes of untruth,
Reverberations from the primal theme
As many as we meet and teach of men.
And therefore in the soul as many dreams
Of half-truth as there may be voices in us
Of man or god testing, protesting, doubting,
Questioning, reasoning of our premisings ;
Ev'n as I test in skeptic singleness
The virtue of our reason-faculty.
Thus test the premise of our power to reason —
Conceivable but as the power of speech
Within to bandy half-truth with the tongue
Of men or gods. Can such an instrument
Of untruth and of inconclusiveness
Determine in my soul's-own dialogue
The postulate of man or god within me
(Whose voice hath seem'd so demoniacal)
To supplement the range of this same reason

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

And yield authority where reason hath none ?
A clear conception of the difficulty
(Won in the bandying of words within
Self-antinomial, interpreting
Each to itself by alteration through
The contact self-conceptual), the problem —
The reasoner to say within his soul :
By right of reason (bandyings of untruth
Through thousand half-truths !) I pronounce him true
Or false (him god or man) who speaks beyond
All logic and all insight reasonable !

Yet are we men ; or true or false, half-gods
In truth-assurance ! And as man-god I find
Mine ignorance self-sibylline, self-taught ;
With, in a sort, some sure authority
Where reason fails. Some tongue divine there is
(Apollon, Zeus, Athena, what care I ?)
That leadeth in this dialogue, outweighs
The skeptic inference of nescience
And asks reconstitution from the first
Of logic-method and false-premising.
For of the reason reason's way hath proved
Equivocacy — by what analogue,

SOCRATES

What test demonstrable, unequivocal
(Apart from reason !), were the reason all ?
And thus, at first thought, must the reason-way
Be self-annihilating, worse than void
Because delusively aspiring to
Authoritatively deny itself —
Bewilderment, to reason contrary !
But the god-man in us will never yield
The right to question and determine for us
Immediate false-and-true, even if beyond
Each tentative decision opens wide
New vista of truth-possibility
Which relegates as unbelieved untruth
The narrower first conclusion. Still the process
Of searching constitutes authority ;
The purpose must assume to guide the mind
With motive final, though each stage by stage
Within the dialectic alter yet
All minute definition of our aim
With shift of standpoint — as my pacing feet
Here in my courtyard change the shifting sight
Through door and portico of shuffling crowds ;
Yet ever bear me back and forth within
The parallels of some soul-perfecting

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Itself as felt self-fix'd, unalterable,
And lending logic to the swarming scene
Else without purport, aimless soullessly.
Therefore a new conception of the soul
Springs of itself : a self-authority
Within the reason, self-condemnatory
Indeed (if those old premises, proved false,
Were still maintain'd as standpoint of debate),
But by the inward dialogue self-proved
Final, demonic, in best sense divine.
For see, friend (may I call my scholar-self,
That leads me whilst he seems to follow still,
Friend whilst the talk flows on and knowledge comes
With personal sympathy in this self-soul ?),
For see how every man within himself
Stands — not a mere untried equivocal
Opinion isolate from aught of truth,
Else in the flux of a void of skepticism ;
But — each within himself as dialogue,
Protagonist and chorus of the truth,
Himself the truth, himself the tragedy
That finds full definition but in death
Of one, in sympathetic passing o'er
To new scenes through the theatre of the world —

SOCRATES

New selfhood — of the many to spread truth
Fresh-learn'd by witness of lost falsity :
The tragic meaning ! See how every growth
Proves but self-definition (in itself,
The continuity each concept lacks
Beyond the moment's premising), soe'er
Corrected, still identical as no
Twice-held opinion ! Therefore growth itself,
By virtue of conclusive questioning,
Proved the all-saving truth !

'T is thus I learn

Self-taught to solve the dim antinomy
As never in mere dialogue with men
Might the truth give and take to true effect.
For see how closer to the truth I stand
Who talk within me, who in hearkening
And counter-talk take instant sympathy
(That exercise of very voice divine)
Which no man with his neighbor feeleth so
Whole and all-grasping as when soul with self
Commune and mutually win the way
Of comprehension ! Thus by this communing
I feel the demon for the truth's own fact ;
My inward sight (conclusive of the views

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Of both inquirers, by hypothesis),
The perfect sanction and authority —
And need none other : proving reason nought
Of mere opinion solely, but itself
The process of opinion-alterance,
The growth intelligent within the soul
(True in degree as sympathy inheres
Instead of isolation, comprehension
In place of demarcation — as in me now !),
That meets and talks with men and meets their
views

With counterview born of the gendering
Of soul in soul, the insight sibylline. —
Why forth into the agora, when truth
Comes final and insistent thus within ?
Why forth to processes of reasoning
Imperfect, self-destructive ; when the way
Of reason, method, logic I have learn'd
Alone within my house apart from men ?
But might I not in converse yet explain them
The loftier definition and so serve
The cause of clear conception in the mind
By leading men each to commune alone
With self and so experience in self

SOCRATES

(Not then ascribable to other minds
Nor any mere opinion here or there)
The truth-assurance, hear the voice divine ?
For thus were I conclusive of mankind,
The continuity of other men,
Their growth, their self-persuasion, guarantee
And warrant of authority as truth;
Outward, as inwardly, that very voice !

SOPHOCLES

NOTHING too much ! — My prosperous old-age
Were proof sufficient of the paradigm.
Nothing too much : gnomic of my career ! —
Aischylos' wrath, Euripides' unrest
(Each rival, he the loftier, earlier one
Or he the versatile of nowadays),
At odds with fortune ; ay, whilst I work on,
At harmony with all things, heartily,
Happily moulding beauty of this breath
Of times antique, to-day's, to-morrow's truth
Alike, in terms and tones accepted yet
Of the old, old stories, tales heroical
Dear to the Attic heart as to mine own.
Aischylos knew the old nobility
Indeed, and worthily did mouth of it
A scene high-sounding ; but himself was moved
Too deeply as by horror, felt of truth
Some secret shame and somewhat blamed in men
Their subtlest reverence, best piety
Of faith, their fair assumption that the gods
Are from reproach immune ; himself thereby —
Through effort clearly to establish Zeus

SOPHOCLES

Above mere blame, habilitate the truth —
Betray'd into impiety perchance
By strange portrayal of a Zeus impure
Self-justified in tyranny. Howbeit,
Was Aischylos at odds with Attic taste,
Safest criterion of sanity ;
Taste which demandeth no self-justifier
For Zeus Olympian, but sees in him
Embodiment of sanction ; all his deeds
Themselves criterial of justice. So
Was Aischylos at odds with earth and found
Too much of meaning in the mighty myth
For man to master and make art of it.
And thus, forsooth, he fail'd. Euripides
Is of another mould, but no less fails.
For him, the too-much lieth in a zeal
To reconstruct, make something new of truth,
Plainly half-impious in denying much
Men must believe, be there but gods at all ;
A zeal too much to substitute for myth
The lore of merely men, to feel and speak
Men as they are, though unheroical
And far too homely for our tragedy.
His ways betray their failure, that they feel

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Scarce horror, scarce a shame, but sympathy
For failure. E'en, his plays would seem to teach
Not reverence for godhood nor for men
Moderate and potent, but for men (unlike,
Far too unlike mine own prosperity
And harmony of competence !) themselves
Similar in their unprosperity
To him who made them not as heroes are.
'T is thus with Aischylos, Euripides,
And all who yield too much unto themselves.
Unmoved I make men as they ought to be —
Men failing alone by Fate, if fail they must
(Crush'd nor as by tyranny divine nor lost
Of any seed of weakness in themselves) ;
Heroic, high : and in myself reflect
Lustre of ancient mythus all my days.
Such as the marble works of Perikles
Or perfect Pheidias is mine old-age,
Serene, unmoved, at harmony with all
Of good or ill, one with our Attic taste,
Calm in Kolonos though the Long Walls fall,
Which fate forefend unto our piety ! —

Nothing too much. — And am I calm at heart

SOPHOCLES

Whilst tottereth Athenai, and the men
Who made her glorious die day by day
Before me, and the years of them are o'er
Who should have been eternal; when the times
(Even in this interval of Spartan peace)
Not as by Fate, but as by human fault,
Fall from their leading and forget their name
Who bless'd and still should bless with memory
The place that once possess'd them? Am I calm?
Might I write, all unmoved, of such as them?
Of gods-made-men, of men heroical
Who labor'd and achieved, yet, by some flaw
Of the human in them, suffer'd and are lost?
Were not the tragedy I might produce
If moved by sympathy with former friends
Something superior to the perfect piece;
Something which Aischylos, Euripides,
Each may have sought if blindly, may have said
Somewhat though I have miss'd? This Aischylos,
Portray'd he not Zeus reconciled with men
By understanding face to face, by speech,
More potent even than a Fate unnamed?
This fervent, multiple Euripides,
Sings he not somewhat as of man who works

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

And partially prevails ? Did Perikles
Perfect yon Propylaia, yet and fell
(Ah ! like these human of Euripides !)
Grief-stricken for a pestilence, dismay'd —
Not as by Fate, but for our human fault —
At the times' prospect ? Did not Pheidias
(If not for tyranny, yet as for godhood,
Ah ! Zeus-apologist of Aischylos !)
Suffer dishonor from Athena's folk ?
I have seen Perikles dismay'd in death
And Pheidias dishonor'd : but myself
(Nay, note the irony : myself the Fate !)
Have never known a failure, not till now !
Scarce or in soul or skena have I fail'd —
Till now by sympathy ? Though all men else,
The princely Perikles or Pheidias
My perfect peer alike (ah, irony !),
Attempt some way too much, are broken by it :
I nowise ! Were my way indeed the best ?
Or faileth not the gnoma where I fail
By sympathy unwonted, proving so much
Of meaning to our life that none should be
Of golden mediocrity who live ?
Was not I dead until this moment's mood

SOPHOCLES

Of sympathy too much revivifying
For calm of artistry within my soul
The over-zeal, the over-weakness, yet
The peerless manhood of my manhood's friends,
Perikles, Pheidias (e'en Euripides ?),
Worthy of loftiest poetry and pose
Upon our skena as I know to-day ?
Combine the Zeus-defensive with the man
Weltering in self-felt weakness : and conceive
The archetype of more-than-tragedy,
The ultimatum of our Attic taste ! —
My way achieved the most : so men must say —
And self-peace with the accomplishment, 't was true —
Behold my three-score tragedies, supreme
In men's opinion over all plays else,
Perchance ? But at this moment all are nought,
All, to begin anew still unbegun,
And I first competent by this too-much
Which now hath hold on me and shakes my soul
With wrath and unrest for the failure of
Perfection, for the perfecting by death
(Or failure's self ?) of work still useless else,
For all its mere achievement. To my soul
Or unto Attika, alone hath worth

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The wonder of men's suffering, the gods'
Self-justification through a tyranny
None the less hateful that it richeth life
To beauty by the very pity of it !

'T is this my pity for that Perikles,
Mine agony for Athenai, that is more
Than any self-success : 't is that alone
Which makes of tragedy the art of truth
And nature above nature (life of mine,
By feeling as by insight life of theirs !) ;
Which makes me great as Aischylos was great
And this Euripides beyond us both :
Me great, if only great by Oidipous
The Sufferer who serveth Attika
By suffering still our hospitality !
Me, moved in Kolonos by mine Oidipous,
Who by too much of failure proves at end
A best possession of our Attika,
A blessing and beneficence of Zeus
Through all our days, maugre the curse and sin
Of human ignorance and gods' despite ! —
Ah ! if through failure hitherto by too-much
Of artistry, too-little poethood

SOPHOCLES

In me (too-much perfecting ; not enough
Creation !), yet some day my sweet Kolonos
May feel bless'd in possession of my bones
And honor me with sacrifice perchance
For honoring in rhyme this Oidipous
Most pitiably human of all men
Though unheroical ; may honor me
For the true poethood, for tragedy
Above, beyond the golden media,
Teeming with sympathies as now my soul
(Not as by Fate, but for her human fault —
As I, being I, must know no Fate for mine !)
Appropriates failure and in her old-age
Becomes (as Aischylos', Euripides')
Herself of tragic meaning, hence of man :
Achieving more than some prosperity
Of senile competence : me, Sophokles,
Somewhat as Oidipous, a truth at last,
Some gnoma in my person and a force
To guide, make grow, not pander Attic taste :
Me, moved in Kolonos by the pity of it !

PLATO

THE blue sky overarcheth with a sense
Of space illimitable, self-sustain'd. —
The blue waves fling awide in the breeze ; sea-birds
Wheel, hover, dart in the foam with plunge and scream
Unfetter'd ; and the wings of this swift ship
Aiginaward from Syrakousai press
Before this west wind as with inward will
And purpose : every sight and sound inform'd
With life-insistence. Yet of me my mind
Alone is free, this body but a slave
By tyranny's command ; and in a slave
Must my mind evermore be buried as
In some self-sheol ; taking blow by blow
The temper of obedience, the tone
Of sequence and subservience ; to be
As shadow only of the mind of man,
As tyrant's sycophant ! How far opposed
Unto my present temper and that tone
Of proud reliance and a high disdain
Which brought my downfall : even thus my mind
Sold into slavery as some prisoner
By power of circumstance ; that circumstance

PLATO

Its bondage to the body ! For all things
Are sycophant, subservient sequently
To matter's tyranny, the base command
Of physical passivity ; and seem
Free but by mind's illusion, active but
By figure of the fancy. Lo ! these masts
Are bended of a blast inanimate
And would not, haply, though indeed they must
Aiginaward bear on ; and so the sea
Bursts beneath burden of this bustling breeze ;
The birds by hard desire of food or lust
To procreate their kind are driven fro
And yon pursuing and pursued, not one
All self-impulsive, but directed all
Toward outward circumstance ; the sacred sky
Doubtless were but some element ; as these
Compell'd — to silence and a stagnancy ?
Shall I, the slave of Dionysios' sneer,
Decay to silence and a stagnancy ?

The mind hath seem'd creator of all things,
Divine by emanation of all truth
Therefrom — impress'd not as from truth-without —
Nowise subservient (witness Sokrates

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Sublime in dying!). Yet this slightest change
Of the body's state from freeman unto slave,
This incident of Dionysios' frown,
Shall this corrupt the essence of Idea?
(Was Sokrates to such a death compell'd?)
How slight an alteration; when from birth
Hath body, like the billows or these birds,
Been driven — whether as by outer force
Or inward want, what heed? — through all its days
A creature of necessity compell'd:
And therewith even the Reason housed therein.
How slight a change, how insignificant,
From free to slave, if body aye be slave!
Have I, one hour, been freeman and not slave?
Is any man then free? Freeman or slave,
Can slavery alter then one whit the state
Of Reason (bar that truth of Sokrates
The Savior)? For if man is never free,
Then slavery, being best knowledge of himself,
But aids toward freedom. And, if not slave-born
In virtue of our body-prisonment,
Then Reason lifts beyond all circumstance
Compulsive, whether sold a slave or no.
(And either way is Sokrates proved free

PLATO

As he devoted body unto death !
And either way is custody of body —
'Soe'er custodian of soul — no curse !) —
I have been somewhat free beyond most men,
Somewhat more reasoning and therefore moved
Of high philosophy to seek abroad
The springs of wisdom in the ways of men.
By Neilos, in Kyrene have I sought ;
Elea ; and schools of the Pythagoreans ;
Completing the best circuit of men's dreams
To blend in them I had at Megara
With keen Eukleides since Athenai-time.
Might I return, within as outwardwise
A bondman ? Or shall this last voyaging
Aiginaward achieve what I have sought :
An insight and a system of the truth ?

Behold ! from those sweet lips of Sokrates
I first received the love of lofty thought —
Him, who in all mine earnest dialogues
Enacts protagonist 'mid many men ;
Him, symbol of all rationality !
To him be mine obeisance ! Though the soul
Seek sight original, his sight leads on !

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

For from his doctrine thus much I imbibed :
The primacy of Reason ; how no truth
Is truth but by the mind's conception of it,
By definition common to its class
And therefore self-sufficed, immutable,
Free and eternal, not as one of these.
His the new gnoma : ' Learn of soul, not world ' —
Despite the physicists. From him the faith :
Of freedom in the realm of pure Idea.
And yet, these elder Eleatic schools
Who look for freedom in some Unity
And find in Wholeness physical their Law !
Or they who, Herakleitos-like, have found
Sanction and satisfaction in the theme
Of flux and passing on the face of things !
Found they not somewhat meet unto the mind,
Somewhat of permanence, self-equity,
In outward world despite the paradox ?
Methinks Pythagoras might yield a term,
Some golden mean between the face of things
That passeth and the 'stablishment of Law ?
Number hath multiplicity and still
Permanence, unity of character,
A certain continence of identity,

PLATO

Through all mutation. With that thought to guide,
Might not a way be found to reconcile
The freedom and the slavery of man ?
For in the man, as in the number-scheme,
Are integrality (the freedom of him,
Well-named the mind — the pride of Sokrates
Unswervable) and multiplicity,
This sequent reference to other things
(That hemlock offer'd to the lips to drink!).
In man are sameness, then, and otherness
Strangely united — as, eclectic,
I seek thus to unite Parmenides
With him of Ephesos through terms of speech
Best writ in the book I bought (but now have lost)
Of Philolaos. Can the problem be
So simple of solution : that some Soul
Inheres between the heavens and the earth,
'Twixt mind and body reconciling them,
Partaking of them both, yet nowise they ;
Whose omnipresence and omnipotence
Is mathematic, Number's very self ?

A mighty bolt to unbar heaven and earth,
Forsooth ; a business now beyond my brain

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Perturb'd by sense of slavehood's impotency,
But mightily alluring should some chance
Exchange this serfdom for the nobler life
Of citizen and teacher in some court
Or garden near to Akademos' grove.
Ah, might I hope some outlook to return
Homeward redeem'd by bounty of a friend !
More like, to execution am I haled
(A parody of Sokrates indeed !)
Among the Aiginetans hostile to me
By reason of their quarrel with our State !
Ah, me ! And yet some insight have I gain'd
Haply of moment equal unto all
That learning of the Schools : this sense that man
Is still both slave and free, and that in world
(The type of serfdom) as in very mind
(Our type of freedom) equally inheres
The dualism and blendeth with them both :
The mind, by reason of its bodiment,
Imbued with strange compulsion ; and the world,
By reason of the primacy of mind,
Passive beneath some freedom-of-its-own
Inseparable, nowise not of it.
And thus is Soul the very problem's self,

PLATO

The mean and common term contain'd of both
(Though both have nought in common, nought between !)

Matter and spirit, containing equally
Both horns of world's dilemma : and thus a term
Not separable nor abstracted from
The conflict which defines it (Sokrates
Involved in birth-and-dying ; life and death
Explain'd through Sokrates !). — And thus were they
Right, the old physiographers, to test
The world all ways, that it might yield its truth
E'en though material ; for in the earth
Its constitution see we mirror-wise
The problem of the heavens, the elements
Which are contain'd of mind inversely shown
(Flux, change for self ; peace for the space of things)
To mind's interpretation. As was he
Right, the great Sokrates, to prove of mind
The truth direct : the peace of inward self,
The roil but own'd of otherness perceived
By sense without. Wherefore am I not wrong
To seek in soul of the world some scheme that shall
(As air is intermediate, proportion'd
Harmonic 'twixt the heavens and the earth)

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Explain the contrast ; show how man is free
(How Sokrates both lived and died, one Man)
Though slave, how serfdom never may express
The psychic habitancy of the spheres
As my soul soars and is at peace with them
Through all this turmoil's sad expectancy !

For, lo ! how were a freedom to be found
In isolation, void of other men
To meet in equal intercourse of mind
With mind, each mind thus entering in and
owning
As self-like every fresh mentality
Not as identical conceived, but known
As other, mutually known, defined ?
The way of loneliness were ever silence
And stagnancy, not self-sufficiency
To any purpose : serfdom, but world's type
Inverted of such isolation ; I
Fitably enslaved for seeking such a scheme
Of vacant chaos as were mere Idea
Hypostatized but not phenomenal,
Identical but wholly undefined —
Interminable ! How were World-Ideas

PLATO

Aught wonderful or worthy, were not each
Defined, scarce by some common character
In concept (quite precluded to the lone
Idea!) but, best, beyond identity,
By contrast self-implied through all the world?
For otherwise were they but number merely;
As world, indifferently were one or nought;
Subject to duplication, hence unreal,
Because still undefined, positionless:
But now are Number reconciling all
Perplexity by implication each
Of unity in multiplicity,
Of integrality in otherness;
And world is not without, but is of mind.—
Yon blue waves beat and burst because they must;
These masts bend, driven, to the piping gale
And part the waters with a roar and rush
Of proud prow-impulse; and the white sea-birds
Pursue and are pursued. But all because
Yon blue sky soars not self-illimitable
(Is not some element apart from these):
Serene indeed, but standing upon earth
Or ocean's wide-encircled founding-flood
A thing of breath and air, of motion, spirit —

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Itself a spirit as all space is spirit
Containing and contain'd ; not calculable,
But valued as of truth : and is as they.
I am a slave and enter into freedom
By bondage — a slave — and have achieved a Soul !

ARISTOTLE

HOW can he teach who faileth to explain
The method of our learning, how we come
To know the unknown : an we truly learn ?
How can he teach who cannot of himself
Find organon, who groping for the Mind
Loseth all grasp of soul's experience ?
How can he yield experience to men ?

Not recollection nor forgetfulness
Might solve this paradox of Known-Unknown,
This presence of an universal truth
In truth not universal, of the God
In self, the certainty in sensuous things
As felt despite their doubt and falsity :
This difficulty of the Master's creed
Which he might name but never might remove
By myth — metempsychosis and the dream
Of *anamnesis*, fable which assumes
Original possession, someway lost,
Of truth whose gradual acquirement,
Of godship whose contingent genesis
(Alone the problem as the paradox !)

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Alone might be demonstrable. For what proof
(E'en were the proof to problem pertinent!)
Were plausible? Where might the man begin
His immemoriality save as
(God being alone possess'd of truth as whole)
The very Godhead? And, if very God,
Then must each consequent remove by birth
(Each strange escape of warrant ultimate
From out the actual which alone Is!)
Be some degeneration, without cause
Or logic possible, compatible;
A flaw in the fibre of the Essence' Self,
A foul decomposition as of death
(A name, this death, perchance, for all this coil?)
Inherent, not to any mortal thing
But, to the causal Origin of Life!
And thus of one hand must the Godhead prove
Self-contradiction, incompatible
With absolute establishment; whilst yet
Of the other hand the life of every man,
Increasing hourly by experience
In knowledge and in wisdom, contradicts
The tendence of the Godhead (thus defined
As stultification), and moreover thwarts

ARISTOTLE

By mere inevitable cumulance
Of certainty and insight through the years
The natural teleology of things ;
Runs counter to the soul's supremest goal
Of perfect godship as the crown of life
(For so this Platon's doctrine needs were crown'd) :
Such godship (that of self-degenerance
Inherent) shown beneath the dignity
Of idiocy, a godship self-deceived
And worse than worthless if deceiving Man !
The Master endeth in a Mystery :
An universe at odds within itself ;
A primal Cause of self-deintegrance —
And he, by preassumed self-ignorance, shown
Unfit to teach who knoweth not to learn ! —
I well know otherwise ; I feel in me
A worth of wisdom in experience,
The value of this sense-accumulation,
The dignity of life as it is learning
And not forgetfulness, the insight gather'd
Aspiring as to God ; and know the God
A goal of aspiration ; if unmoved
(Still unattainable), yet not at last
Devolving and destroying, save as death

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Be parcel of developmental life,
Wherethrough the individual achieves
An impulse for the race and class of each
Onward and Godward! — How shall these truths be?

A motion and a Cause; the creature moved
And the Creator — if the phrase be so.
An immanence of universalness
Conative, self-recognizant in act,
A system of accumulance impress'd
As in a mould; a force defining self
Substantialwise; a matter and a form.
These, the essentials; and the rest obtains.
I touch and test the world of men and things,
Finding one substance to the touch and test,
An opposition, self-negation of
All impulse, a passivity excluding
(Particularity of judgment-mode)
Its own mere part-displacement under stress,
A space-impassive none the less compell'd:
For creature-moment; and I call the thing
Matter, as meaning elemental rest,
The moved and dead-created, uncreate,
Immobile in itself — nay, that which hath

ARISTOTLE

As 't were no selfhood, is not in itself.
I touch and test the world of self within,
Finding a test, but not a substance here
To touch: an action of appropriance
(The generality of truth-adjudged),
Hardly of opposition though containing
All self-distinction, part within the part.
This that I find I call the mind of me
(Experiential; never as in dream
Disjunct from world, self-segregate from things;
But registrant and nowise self-innate);
Made universal as the world of mind,
The self-impressive, that which makes the test
As register'd and testing registrates;
Which is creator of distinctiveness
As though internal through the vague extern
Of segregative substance, binding it
To self-relationship and unity;
And thus is mould, or still more subtly Form,
The final motive. Thus the riddle reads.
Now, to the theme of world-development
(Consonant with the growth of me by thought
Or act-participation in affairs
From day to day) must a new proof adhere

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Of tendency, self-teleology
In mutualization of the duplex stuffs
(Abstractly so defined as I've defined them
Each aspect severally); for these must still
Constitute interplay; and otherwise
Were no duplexity but separate worlds
Unthinkable, preposterous to proof.
Therefore must be for further postulate
The innate yearning of the primal vague
Toward truth-distinctiveness as in a sort
Appropriate thereto, a property
(Degenerative of degenerance' self,
Preclusive of inertia in the inert !)
Even of passivity as actualized;
And on the counter hand the zeal of mind
To transcend and sublate with proof of form
(And thus achieve itself !) material fact :
The term of mind actualized so and taken
For mutual-matter's goal-finality.
Likewise the inward latency of things
Toward declaration — not as though some void
Were gradual fill'd of substance less or more
Compact-diffuse; but as though form and substance
Were self-processive, were by nature nought

ARISTOTLE

Than mutuality, whose proof and sign
Is Time, the passing of the days and years.
Nor might a logic of analysis
(Such as were practical to be put forth,
On basis of the Platonism here,
To counteract the Master's mere mistakes
Of extra-worldliness, and yet to be
Readily understood of the schools),
A classification of our genera
And species, an epistemology
Of type as perfect object (as I fear
My doctrine will adumbrate, implicate
As men will half-mistake it!) quite attain
A method-organon of such a scheme
Of cumulance and temporality,
In mutualizing of each element
By definition through all substance else.
Substance unmutual were stuff of space,
'T is true, demarcable and alterable
Partitive-wise, abstract each part from part
And strictly self-contain'd in every part
Without a reference to aught extern —
Such stuff were well demonstrable by rule
Of contradiction and a common term

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

For consubstantiation ; and indeed
Were such a logic-system Platon's surely,
Conformable to and explicable of
The pure Idea. But such should not be my
Doctrine of knowledge ; for my creed should be
More adequate to a knowledge entering in
As mind-term of the world-hypothesis
Developmental, cumulant — whereof,
Despite all ignorance, might no term be
Itself unknown in present actualness ;
Such membership in knowledge rightly achieved,
Not by community with outer fact
(Mergence impossible) but, by reference
To somewhat (selfhood with the object of it)
Both gone before and coming after ; each term
Itself present in time but nowise one
With what it cannot be, the yesterday
Nor the to-morrow ; but each day of days
Defining and referring in itself
To all-time ; thus eternal ; thus self-known
By self-distinctiveness ; thus generalized,
Self-absolute as every Truth must be !
And thus alone were knowledge possible
As universal in the temporal scheme ;

ARISTOTLE

And thus alone were logic actual
Because contain'd of cumulative life
Processive, self-achieving as toward God !

'T were plausible! And note how opens out
The field of travail to philosophy :
No longer blind to every fact of earth
With faith but focuss'd on the farthest stars,
But finding in the daily strife o' the world
The dear domain of absolute idea,
Of form the truth-constructor, not beyond
World wholly (for, were form beyond the world,
Were form but shown inane and actionless
In isolation of a pseudo-truth
Call'd mathematic, number) but, itself
The mind, self-comprehension of things all.
So, to the field of travail ! that this earth
Be catalogued ; and categorical
Analysis — not sheerly part from part,
But mutualwise with generality
Specific in contrast self-contain'd
Of each itself — declare of each the frame
And genesis, its coming unto truth. —
Granted that all shall pass and grow anew

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

To stricter frame, more self-disposed to achieve
Economy of action purposeful ;
Granted that teleology propose
Invention now undream'd : and therefore these
Now extant modern instances of truth
Wax obsolete : shall that deter one whit
The wonder of the instant truth-survey,
The sure investigation here and now
Whereof each item of real genesis
(Nowise explaining away the now-complex !)
Shall postulate and indicate to men
The doctrine of the vital latency,
The potency of matter and the zeal
Energic of the world-updrawing mind
Godward developing through all her days ?
The cause efficient as the genesis :
And then beyond, beneath and still within,
The God-cause final, the perfected Form
So far as may be meant of mortal mind
Working within these days and in these ways
That man may work in as the world is young.
And, young or old, some knowledge step by step
Sure in the doctrine and the world-idea,
The formative pure process and the proof

ARISTOTLE

By teleology, the yearning-toward
Inherent and insistent! — At the worst
'T were plausible, though still the rift remain
And riddle of an universe at odds!
Though still the self-dilemma needs inhere:
Of Learning in the stead of Ready-Known,
Of genesis in place of plethora!
Though all be problem still, 't were plausible!
Why trouble, then, further with the riddle of it,
When at the worst my world is onwardly
A self-correction, not a chaos-come?
My logic stands sufficient to the times,
Their need to dis-god Platon and design
An organon of high acquirement
By truth transmissible, so teachable,
Not block'd by body's bad forgetfulness,
But plain appreciable as here and now
Complete, didactically finitive:
Wanting but souls to seize it! Oh, for some
King-born disciple, one who might, by strength
Of this world-knowledge, as he conquer'd earth,
Rule well, self-cognizant of law and rule
Within him as within the world he ruled;
Some pliant prince, receptive to the mould

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

(Philippos' child, the Makedonian's,
My father's patron's grandson, should be he ?)
Of this my masterful impressive mind
As matter to the Form — I unto him
Master and God-cause final ; he to me
The latency, the striving. That my labor
Be not lost, but my name be known in him
(No name of race nor class nor kind, but my name !),
An universe of practice, though my theme
Be theoretic and my deeds be nought. —
The Master of these Akademos-groves
Hath miss'd the meaning, is as one apart,
For all his vast discipleship here shown.
He is a truth, but weak within the world
Because of isolation, disregard
Of the body of the world, its genuine zeal
Toward self-salvation and accumulance
Of truth experiential in the form
Impressible by men 'mongst other men,
By mind 'mongst other minds projectible
Each upon others pedagogically —
And by such only. For were truth apart,
A theme but of these Akademic groves,
Then were no knowledge possible, unless

ARISTOTLE

We dream'd and have forgotten and at best
May bitterly remember as we die
The old lost Godhood self-deintegrant.
But I, I grow by inward genesis
Of truth in every instant ; and start forth
A Teacher ; and shall teach unto some man
(Whether or no Demosthenes denounce !)
The secret of the governance of earth :
And, unto ages, truth grown of my truth !

ASOKA

BEHOLD these my decrees, on steles set
Plain, in the portions of mine empire
Triune, in North and East and West alike
Proclaiming dominance of my true creed,
The cult of Him the Buddha, Blessèd One ! —
How hold my diverse empire in hand
As wholly mine and mighty, save by such
Dominance of some spiritual truth
Potent to seize upon men's many minds
And so subdue them to subservience,
Leaving my mind lifted on high alone
Above their poor desires and feebler will ;
My will and my desire alone of strength
To overcome sedition, stamp all sign
Of treason from beneath me, and be sure :
Asoka, I, supreme, imperial ?

Asoka, I, supreme, imperial,
Founding my power on the Buddha's word !
What creed so clearly might consolidate
Imperial power, as this of quietism,
Some somnolent non-assertion of men's wills

ASOKA

Against mine in the world, their hope at last
For innermost non-essence, slow attain'd
Through many lives of meekness more and more?
Through many lives of weakness: I alone
Strong, unencumber'd of the creed imposed!
These priests of Brahma (whom I nowise hurt
Now they are harmless!) had made sorry slaves
With their pretensions to authority
And spiritual power over men
By ceremonial observances
And sacrifices to propitiate
A pandemonium of deities
Conceived above all power imperial!
How had I wasted life in truckling to them,
Cajoling, flattering; and been weaken'd by it
In every hour of my governing!
How had I been their puppet, just a show
Of kinghood: but for these few cataclysms
Happily now perform'd upon their heads
Which rid me of their menace. Whereupon
In gratitude to Gautama, behold
These steles of an universal peace
Proclaiming quietism; to all men
Self-abnegation, and at last reward

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

(Scarcely by grace of any deity),
For non-resistance, in a nothingness :
Myself alone remaining as some god ;
Asoka, I, supreme, imperial !
May I, the king, attain no Buddhahood !

What worthy system were there of a world
Without some dominant superior
To order and devise, plan and proclaim,
Determining the Path, making the Law
Unto the diverse disagreements of
The dull and wrangling peoples ? What were well
Were it not for the wisdom of some man
Eminent, understanding, capable
Even to compel obedience overtly
And with authority overawe the heart
And mind unto subservient content ?
These priests of Brahma were a wiser folk
Than any mendicant ; and e'en within
This Order of the Law (in monastery
As through novitiate), the Law prevails
As Gautama devised it, and the Law
Needs, both, and finds preceptors wise enough
(Though by their vow not menacing to me !)

ASOKA

To discipline, chastise, enforce, and seem
Authoritative to the time and place.
How doth this plain necessity for power
And for obedience run through all our ways
Of earth and men, preventing quietism
Absolute, abrogating emptinesses
Of will and purpose, proving each of us
Incapable of nothingness, each man
Imperial in a sort, someway supreme
In the mere life-assertion every day
Of breath and being. And the greatest man
Is the most dominant ; the happiest
He who proclaims and can enforce decrees
On the recalcitrant. These Brahmin priests
Were greater than their fellows ; that they fell
Because a greater was among them, I —
I, though low-born of caste, by strength of heart
Brahmin indeed of Brahmins, greatest of them,
Asoka, king, supreme, imperial !

Ah, but a greater was upon the earth :
Gautama, the Enlighten'd, Blessèd One,
He whom I reverence, who without decree
Or force of cataclysm, nor by aid

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Of any power material could compel
All men to yield unto His purposes
And be subservient unendingly !
Even Asoka, in defying Him
Who counsell'd uttermost humility,
Hath bow'd unto His power and become
His slave, Asoka who establisheth
Himself supreme, imperial but by strength
Of Buddha's Law within the kingly mind :
Imperial disciple ! Would that I
Knew but the secret of His prevalence,
To rule without decree, command by strength
Of prescience inborn ; and be, as He,
Buddha ; in mine own person, as a creed !

PAUL

A MURMUR is of many men around
Unfriendly (as at Thessalonica and
Philippi) — God be unto me a shield
And strength ; for I shall need Him when I stand
High there on Areopagus. The Jews
Hate, when they dare indulge their hearts to hate,
Even with the hate of hounds and wolves (I, once,
A Grecian Jew : twice venomized !) ; the Greeks
Shriek shriller than the Jews, but at the worst
Hate Jew worse than this Jesus of my word.
(Perchance their hatred of myself as Jew
Will melt in mockery when I come to speak
Of truths un-Jewish and a novelty ?)
That thus will God help, guard, if not by peace
And goodwill among men, at least by strife
Of Greek 'gainst Hebrew, shielding Christ and me—
A Roman citizen as they may know —
Beyond the fear of harm. I less should fear
Were mine affliction not upon mine eyes :
That so I see not clearly, but as darkling
Perceive these scowling faces in the throng
So close about. But I will swell my thought

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

With inward vision and beyond their frowns
Draw wisdom with courage from the Source of both,
Dispelling hesitancy. — I will mount
Mars' Hill and speak unto the Stoics thence,
The Epicureans and idolaters.

Athens below me as I dimly climb,
All Greece, a different nation, other minds
Than Antioch, than Salamis, despite
That Hellenism of the Syrian shores —
For was not I a Jew though Hellenist;
Although Cilician, mystic at the heart?
These are not mystics at the heart (for all
That altar to the Unknown God I spell'd
Below in Agora!), but men of sense
(For so, in the moment's need, their viewpoint seems
More rational than formerly — than mine?)
Desirous of an understanding mind,
As I in private converse have discern'd,
Beyond mere superstition. — How to meet
Need of the moment by the word of God?
How render unto Pericles (for much
Of Athens' history I late have learn'd,
Her rulers and philosophers) in speech

PAUL

The things of Pericles, when my truths be
The things of God? — And yet I feel that God
Is logical — as Greece is logos-wise ;
Is practical — as I am practical :
Apostle laboring, accomplishing
By argument unto the moment's need —
I something of the demagogue at soul,
Half-Alcibiades, Demosthenes,
If also Plato at the core of me !
And therefore is no blasphemy at worst,
But verily the best mere man may do
(Whilst combating their soulless Aristotle,
To waive that worth of Plato they would scorn)
If God be made a purpose practical
(The things of Pericles made God's thereby !)
Unto the reason, practised argument
And sophistry that fills this people here.
No doubt a later age may find in him,
The Stagirite, much inference of a Mind
Somewhat omnipotent, creative, which
Folk shall confuse with Him I'd now proclaim.
Doubtless the peaceful Platonism in me
Of reservation beyond earthly strife,
Of resurrection, what-not after death,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Shall color as with a jargon of the schools
My dogma of the God who, also Man,
Concludeth all, yet scarce is very world :
Himself a part of it whilst still the whole.
Yet now I feel me toward the Stagirite
Hostile who teacheth isolation, mind
From mind, without a resolution through
Any divinity inherent in us
As we are men material here and now,
Any communion as of charity
Which maketh universals, each in each,
By insight and by sympathy, not by
Analysis of common characters
As in the scheme abstractive taught of him.
Plato were more my creed, in truth, save he, too,
Suffer interpretation misconceived
(As now these men of Athens would construe
Amiss the mystery !) of God but name
For generality abstract and lost
In ether of the spheres, as are their gods —
Leaving poor man alone and earth alone
Disintegrant as in their Stoicism.
Thus, in default of either of their wisest
(Opposing Aristotle's soullessness

PAUL

Of earth, and God beyond real earth or man ;
Avoiding Plato's generality
Of world-salvation through the archetype
Beyond real reason ; though affirming through
Christ the creed's universal applicance),
So must I make God very practical,
Complaisant to the motive of their mind,
Its pseudo-wisdom and its old despair !

What was their utmost wisdom ? ' Know thyself ' !
And what the outcome of much earnest search
Unguided of the Christ ? Just this at last :
' The self is atom, item each alone,
' Indifferently to the wider world
' Of other selves sustaining each its fate —
' Body or spirit, Stoic either way ;
' Epicurean severally, though soul —
' Imposed by all-soul of the universe
' As from without. The names we give the gods
' Are but a man's emotions clothed with false
' Impersonation in the void of things.'
There the scheme ends and fails ; the gnosticism,
The boasted system of these men of sense,
Turns to the nature of that God Unknown

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

(The atom, else the generality ;
Zero or void — who can determine which ? —
Alike intended of Democritus,
Zeno, Parmenides, or Socrates !) —
The Known, the Self ; because, though miscall'd spirit,
Regarded as the body (earth, as truth
All-unregenerate by the syllogism
Which proves earth false, impossible to proof
Unless divine in essence !), mere mine or thine ;
A Christ's that might have died to rise no more ;
The unity assumed : nothing of God ;
And thus God-nature, nothing ! — Can a man,
With such as these to hear and be made convert
(Keen disputants imbued of paradox,
Glorying in contradiction if but clean-cut),
Howe'er he truly scorn their paradox
Of thee and me ununion'd of a God,
Talk mystic doctrine ; or hath mystery
Been long ago to logic-chopping tongues
Emptied of any than a barren fame ?
Were that a service unto God, to speak
Mere esoteric unity-through-Christ
(As through some All, failing the truth of Self !) —
Vicarious, for all our faith in it —

PAUL

As I have elsewhere taught it, when to them
'T would seem so stale an outcome, just a myth
At best of Delphi or Eleusis there ?
Ah, rather, take Christ as the type of each
Successful in the knowledge of Himself
And only therefore centrally of God
And, as God, savior to the race of men !
God is the unity their wisdom lacks,
'T is true (acceptance of the Self in all
It knows or feels or hath its being in :
Self, therefore world-sustainer, Christ or each !) —
'T is true ; nought truer, than God's inmost truth.
Yet what were God or Christ, were Christ or God
Not yet of self, nothing of self's own world,
Unknown as were the fabled Pythian ? —
It is an instance, then, to lay aside
All mystery and thus to serve best God
By making very self-like Him we seek —
Method of Socrates ; though not, as that one
By isolative world-analysis
And negative demarcation, proving self
Or God alike but that which truth is not !
For fact at last is still the truth we seek,
Still subject of salvation, I or thou

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Saved but by proof that each is yet his world
And therefore universal and the God.
It is an instance, then, of 'Know Thyself',
The God Thou art, not as a myth outworn
Of hyperhumans, powers impossible
At war and lust within the world (still less
Without the world, by Platonism!) — but just
Knowledge, the world as faith self-makes it, shown
Contain'd within the life of each of men
So far as wisdom is the life of him
And holds the world concluded of his strength.

With this, the truth I see within, I mount
Fearless and foeless to the speaking-place
(Their frowns, as not when Socrates stood here,
Melted to semblance of some courtesy),
My speech determined in unwonted guise
To meet this moment: not the Unknown God
Their superstition and idolatry
(For so I see their sense, by loftier sense
Of understanding contravening theirs!),
'Wilder'd by logic of the Stagirite
Or dream of Plato, hath reduced to nought;
Such as I preach'd, through Christ's authority

PAUL

And mystical identity, before
At Antioch or Salamis ; and such
As, if without unreasoning faith in Christ,
Mere negative analysis must rest in,
If Christ be vicar and not type of each
Self-savior universalized : but now
(For 't is my second calling, first to faith
In blindness, now to wisdom inwardly —
Mine eyes' affliction serving in good stead!)
Without least blasphemy, most practical ;
(Demagogue I, most suited to the time
And place, so thus most serviceable) : the God
Of Knowledge, universal world of each —
Prosper'd, made godly most, by knowledge of it ! —
They question me, asking to hear my truth. —

“ Ye men of Athens, hear me while I speak
“ The God ye ignorantly worship : God ! ”

PETER

NOW is the hour of failure of my life,
The sinking of the star within my soul
Which hitherto hath led me and sustain'd
Through divers tribulations since that night
Accursèd when I did deny Him thrice.
Since that dark hour of Jesus' earthly death
Hath Christ in me, the risen Spirit of God,
Upheld and temper'd with a living strength
Of infinite salvation: a commission,
By overflow beyond my need alone,
To be Apostle, Christ's evangelist
Unto the saving of the souls of men.
Till now, hath Christ been power in me; but now
I fail, am swoon'd in spirit, am as though
Christ had not risen from the dead, but lay
Still in the tomb as I so fear to lie.
I am grown old so very suddenly;
My limbs half-palsied with the stricken heart
In panic at the last. The last is come;
And I, with what of palsied, frenzied speed
Remains, am fleeing like a thief in the night
From Rome, from Nero and a martyr's crown.

PETER

I am unworthy of a martyr's crown.

I flee from glory : utterly unfit.

The congregation hath for many days
(Such Sheep as Cæsar's savagery hath spared)
In secret meeting-places pray'd of me
To make departure, in the name of Christ
(As Christ permitted to our finitude)
Preserving from the persecution this
Enfeebled body, sorrow-stricken head,
For new apostlehood in fairer fields
And less distressful days. I did resist,
Knowing the cowardice their words awoke
Within me, feeling that escape was worse
Than any bodily death. But now I yield me
Unto temptation irresistible,
Stampeded by my fear ; and mask that fear
In resignation to the call of God
Afar, who dwells no longer in myself
As erst ! — Could Christ Himself, might He appear,
Condemn my soul more utterly than I ?
My limbs swing quivering onward ; but my soul,
Abject before the judgment-bar of Christ,
Resists itself ; would turn upon this path

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Back to Gehenna were it yawning for me —
Save that my soul, not yet so shameless-lost,
Acknowledges no right to martyrdom.
And therefore must shamefacedly away.

Yet, were it not some subtler torment still
Of terror, self-disguised, which I detect
In this self-condemnation barring me
From best nobility ? The bodily fear,
Welcomes it not the abnegation, but
Because the self-distrust is easier,
The abrogation of all heavenly hope
Evades the calling to the cruel cross ?
Deem'd Christ not (knowing every thought of man)
Me worthy, as poor sinful men are found
Faltering and repenting every hour,
To be His conservator upon earth,
Holder of mystic keys to ope the door
Of earth to heaven ; and call'd me by the name
Cephas, the rock-foundation of the faith ?
Foresaw He not these dregs of sin in me,
This fainting of the body ? Yet said He not :
The soul is willing though the flesh be weak —
And therefore not unworthy though it sleep

PETER

As slept it there in His Gethsemane ?
I know so surely what Christ's self would do.
He would be hasting from the ends of earth
(Could but one soul be saved for God thereby)
Toward crucifixion here the second time !
Perchance Christ hasteth now to save my soul
Out of the dismal slumber of this night ! —
Awake, my soul ! Methinks there doth appear,
Like to quick gleams of dawn athwart the way
(The hour of dawn is come and cocks do crow
As once in far-off sad Jerusalem !),
The spirit of Jesus ! Those, His hands ; and that,
His white-robed person as from that first tomb
It rose with angels o'er the sepulchre —
I saw it not, but feel it was as now !
And, there, that burst of morning-shine upon
The mist of this low country, beams His face :
Belovèd features seen as long ago,
Though never latterly. And these His feet
Are stirring in the radiant risen dust !

It is the morning and the night is past.
The day hath purpose of evangel still. —
Master ! I turn. I know Thou wilt forgive.

CONSTANTINE

A CREDIBLE wonder ! ' In the sign of the cross,
' Lo ! thou shalt conquer ! ' — And destroy I did
Mine enemy. And all that appertain'd
Unto his power hath fallen mine appanage.
And I am Imperator unopposed.

I am inclined unto the way of Christ
Without such intervention, knowing well
The fruit of victory were best a peace,
The source of peace best found within the soul,
And the soul best at peace within her world
When loving most (love, but a sympathy
Of world-control — as I, being unopposed,
Am fain to love !) beyond the body's bounds.
Therefore I would not be myself the God
And worshipp'd of the nations as were needs
The cult did I declare for idol-Rome
Her priests and deities ; for so myself,
Being above humanity, were then
Incapable of sympathy, perverse
In every action and impolitic,
Blind to the signs of the times (this cross, the chief !),

CONSTANTINE

Regardless of all rights or righteousnesses
Beyond my person proven in itself
Alone invaluable ; and my soul
Were thus confined to dwell within my breast,
Nor could expand with zeal beneficent.
Nor do the reasons of best politic
Longer allow a God Imperial
Where now so clear majority of men
Decline the worship, are recalcitrant
Even in face of Diocletian's beasts ;
And plain rebellious where 't were folly quite
Wantonly to provoke with such demand.
Nor would I be the Stoic, shut within
The circuit of his breast, whose idleness
Of dull indifference vainly would deny
All vital interest in men's affairs.
How be as old Aurelius meditating
Conduct of life as though the life of the world
Were wholly alien (whilst under his hand
Men shook and suffer'd !), when unto mine hand
Are peoples teeming, and the power of well
Or ill within the hollow of my palm,
And daily everything to judge and do
Pertaining to the conduct of the world

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

As 't were my life, as I must feel for it
And judge for it and wield it as 't were mine ?
Or how indulge in dream Philonian —
Platonic, Hermetic, Saccan, who may care ? —
Of æon-emanation and exile
(In mystification-subtlety) of God
From world and world from life, sith all within
The soul is held but as some gnosis-scheme
Of Logos-wrought construction, nothing like
(Nor did Plotinus scare the ghost away,
For all his intermediacy of worlds !)
A life where all is opportunity
And all is opportune unto the soul
(That takes the trick of opportunity !)
To see and feel the life of thousand souls
As one, by sympathy to move and sway
All purposes and passions to mine own ;
And thus, by playing the god within the world
Whilst still man, learn the truth of God-within,
Not God-beyond, the system of earth-things —
For thus, I deem, doth Hosius seem to teach,
Seeking to turn me to the ways of Christ —
Of Christ, Himself the system, that He be
In guise a man, unworshipp'd, spat upon

CONSTANTINE

And crucified even because His soul
Was great beyond the body, and therethrough
(As may mine in my plenitude of power !)
Did feel and sympathize with life of men !
Such, God should be — a God beyond myself
(Would I be Christ, to suffer as the God,
When power with sympathy pertains to kings ?)
And yet within the working of the world :
And thus within myself that I shall wield
Power by fostering, not by opposing,
('Ware yet to him who sole opposed my mood !)
The prevalent purposes of many men
Made thereby loyal subjects. — What care I
For heresy, for this new Arius' creed
(One hears fresh-rumor'd through the scandal'd

West

Out of the East of thousand fantasies !)
Concerning Godhood's man-embodiment,
Its unity or difference in God —
When plain I see the purpose through all creeds
Toward world-religion fit for private life
Since seated in the soul of all alike
Who find God in the sympathy with all
Honest opinion ! — Whence I shall announce —

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

When the due time come, and Licinius,
This Eastern half-Augustus who remains
'Twixt me and absolute power, shall in turn
Be ruin'd, and I have leisure then to love
In way of Christ as Hosius would approve it! —
Conversion of the State as of myself
Unto the Christian teaching : scarce to crush
The Stoic or the Mystic — let them dream
Along their ways of life, which shall be safe
(Save if by men's insistent loud demand
Their persecution should prove politic ?)
Within my bounds of empire ; for they lack
The worldhood as the Godhood ; and shall pass
Without mine intervention. And within
The Christian covenant shall every soul —
So long as he be quiet citizen —
Enjoy respect unto his private creed :
Save only, should majority demand,
(Surely, for reasons of a quiet State)
I well might silence him call'd Arius,
Else him who may oppose him — who may care ?

Then let the plausible miracle have sway
Sufficient to enforce within my heart

CONSTANTINE

Soul's natural propensity, give excuse
For politic conversion to the creed
Which seems to bode prosperity and peace
With power by insight of the hearts of men.
Unfold the Labarum above the host !
' In this sign shalt thou conquer ' — credibly !

ATHANASIUS

MYSELF against the world! — that here I stand
(Though courteous, Cæsar's chill magnificence)
Exiled, alone among the Treviri!
Nay, worse, Nicæa's declaration quite
Betray'd of men; that I of all alone
Uphold the truth; and every man beside
Of all who dare lift voice and make belief
Effective, felt within the ways of life,
Cleave to that Arian error, how our Christ
Were demi-god, not God essentially!
Christ, and is this the working of Thy Word
That Thou shouldst be betray'd a second time?

Christ, and, alas! this momentary doubt
Of my poor self against the whole wide world:
The doubt of my clear vision! Would Thy care
E'er have committed truth to me alone?
Is it the loneliness, whilst sick at heart
I mourn in this cold boreal clime our sun
And sweetness of the Alexandrian air,
That all-congeals the passion of my soul

ATHANASIUS

To mist and dimness and the ice of doubt,
Deadening faith ? Or doth Thy spirit at last
Desert Thine instrument of Providence,
Leaving me naked, inspirationless,
Defeated and acknowledged desolate,
Myself in error ; and mine enemies
(I fancied Thine) but mine triumphantly
Because within Thy will inscrutable
Chosen truth-messengers mysteriously ?
All were as dark, O Christ, if truth were so.
For me, I could not see, being in wrong ;
I could not understand this being in wrong
Because mine error's fault would blind the soul.
But either way must I have faith in Thee
For utter Godhead, being by Thy will
Born as I am to this belief in Thee.
And, right or wrong, must speak Thy gospel still,
Whether by plenitude of inward light
Thy servant, or by plenitude of sin
Thine anti-Christ self-blinded of the void !
Man scarce may know whether the will be free
Or fated of Thy Providence ; but this
Too bitterly I know, that, right or wrong,
Man is but blind unless by grace of Thee

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

His blindness proveth wisdom. But Thy grace
Extendeth not to me. And lost am I.

Am not I lost because I never knew
The grace of moderation, realizing
Not this dilemma of the blinded flesh?
That I but stand more fervently confirm'd
(By self-deceit, so be it by Thy will?)
In hatred of that half-god humanhood
Their creeds would foist upon Thee (being assured
By creature-blindness in this human soul —
Christ save the contradiction! — Thou couldst ne'er
Be any compound of humanity
As such with God; but that Thy manhood were
The Godhead through and through and so self-
known!) —

That I may never waver in belief
(To fall, if fall I must, in self-despite),
Preventeth not this keen soul-scrutiny
Which showeth other minds as self-deceived
Doubtless, at best as wholly self-unknown,
Dependent on Thy grace for right belief,
As I; and therefore worth, none less than I,
The pity and charity wherewith Thy mind

ATHANASIUS

Must ever regard this mole-like mind of man.
To what end Thou might'st misinform Thy seed
(Nay, rather, permit man's own perversity
Some want of Thy correction) scarce were theme
For any mind of man e'er to admit
Unto his ignorance. Though this at least
Is sure, that now in ignorance self-known
Mine ignorance uprears regenerate ;
Now for the first truly acclaiming Thee !
Now for the first truly a man of God,
A man God-like as Thou art God made Man.
Thine, Christ, the Gnosis ; ours, the Ignorance :
Alike in self-acceptance. And, since man
Hath thereby knowledge of his ignorance,
Are we, as Thou in Arius' half-creed,
Each demi-god ; and Arius were right
If but with our humanity concern'd ;
Each man, some incarnation of Thy truth,
Divine because self-seen in ignorance ;
Yet human sheerly. And myself were wrong,
Who fancied Thy Christ-incarnation other
Than thuswise human wholly in that Thou
Wast cognizant of being still divine ! —
What further subtlety were plausible

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Beyond such understanding, by Thy grace,
As this vouchsafed ? How longer make dispute
Concerning Thy humanity's degree
Of Godhood or of humanhood, where both
Alike are property incorporate
Of every man ? 'T were but that we, being flesh,
Achieve this Godhood of self-cognizance,
Acknowledgment unto ourselves (by grace
Of Thee) of this our ignorance inborn ;
Whereas Thy Godhood, for the sins of the world
In ignorance conceived, didst take upon Thee
The partiality of innocence ;
That, by the spectacle of innocence
Godly in perfect self-acknowledgment,
Might men discover in themselves the seed
Of Thy divinity — as I to-day.
What further subtlety were possible ?
Yet, Christ, perchance, in these cool boreal lands —
Who knows ? — where passion warps not, but the
sight
Within were at the acme, and the man,
Imbued with confidence of innocence,
In natural exaltation might assume
World-comprehension quite without Thy grace —

ATHANASIUS

A comprehension wantonly supposed
Of wisdom, not of selfish ignorance —
To such a man might not this doctrine seem,
To-day which I inherit and achieve,
Some warrant to degrade in parity
Thy manhood to my manhood, thus to mock
Thee with assumption of a full divine
For man, as Thou assumedst humanity?
Pardon the wanton word! Yon Arius
Degradeth Thee not as would such a man
(And till this hour had I but been as he
In crass self-confidence — though spared his
folly !)

By such apotheosis of his kind !
For within such an arrogance might no law
(For no humility would look for it !)
Of logic countervene still to maintain
Distinction intervening as reveal'd
Between Thee and Thy people ne'ertheless.

Therefore, O Lord, unto Thy revelation
I still appeal against this Arian world,
Not unto logic ratiocinant
Nor unto grace of comprehension ; but

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

To faith in revelation ! That alone
(Ay, plain I feel it in this moment's need)
Can save our ignorance from claim at last
To perfect parity with truth of Thee
And with Thy wisdom, Godhood. — Thus, O
Christ,

Alone in Treviri my soul appeals
Not more to argument which leads too far
For safety of poor human ignorance
(Scarce to a Cæsar, seem he ne'er so kind !)
But, to transfiguration : Christ reveal'd —
Thy revelation, against Arius !

AUGUSTINE

IT is not that I too well knew the sweets
Of the old false way (he my natural son
Adeodatus was some proof of them !);
But rather that this tumult at the walls,
This thunder of the Vandal horde's attack,
Hath meaning and prejudgment of a new
Wise order founded in the way of Christ
As over against the way of heathen gods
Which we, though followers and folk of Christ,
Must represent and still uphold in the breach
Against God's Genseric ! I little heed
(Though in itself his error kill the soul !)
That he profess — for thus the rumor runs —
Fiercely that heresy of Arius
The anomœan — as I still less heed
That I, the staunch supporter of the truth,
Held mysteries Manichæan in those days
Of youth-perversity and carnal lust.

For none less I stand representative
Of Rome imperial, the Christless State,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The City not of God though Christ's in name.
And he no less, though nominally none
Of Christian principle, denying Christ's
Incarnate Godhood by declaring Him
Created if divine — he, Genseric,
But battles in the cause of order new,
Destroying that the Lord may build again
On a clean field when we unworthy both,
And all unworthy that are men with us
Alive, lie swept from out the path of God ;
And God's own City may itself arise
Perchance on earth even as now on high.
Thus much were my conviction which the mind
Must cling to for some comfort : I must fall
And with me all mine African great Church
For Christ's sake and in Christ's name, over-
whelm'd
'Neath armèd heresy that burns and slays
By mercy Providential, knowing none.
Such the sole comfort : that God's wisdom rules
In worst disaster ! — And this human heart
Is sore and sorrowing and self-ashamed,
Saying unto the God who calleth me
Soon to His presence as this weak frame yields

AUGUSTINE

Worn-out with years — saying to God : ‘ I heed
‘ Indeed the lesson ; but mine heart is sore.’ —

O thou great City of Christ in Africa
For whose establishment mine earnest years
With voice and hand and screed devotedly
Have struggled and attempted in the name
Of God’s Word and the Will of Him who died !
O thou, God’s grace upon the face of earth,
Earth’s inspiration faith-fill’d, leading on
Each member of the body politic,
Each person of the City of Earth, in God
From grossness of the carnal lust and strife
Toward peace of heavenly perfectedness —
Thou Church ! — to see thee perish utterly
Even as I faint and am not swift to save ;
Even as I pass and never may return
To be thy builder and renew thy strength !
Verily, verily the heart is sore
(O Lord, forgive the old man full of days !).
Ah ! to see all the faithful stricken down,
Blinded and scourged, robb’d, ravish’d, and enslaved,
The bishop and the presbyter, the flock
Shepherded of them, one and all betray’d

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Unto the ravening of the Vandal wolves !
And to desert my people at the last,
Myself to steal away unto my God
Whilst they my people suffer at the maw
Of Genseric, I leaving them alone ;
Evading as a traitor from the world :
Entering lone into felicity !
And to reflect that, most of all, our woes
Have come of too keen controversial
Dispute, dividing peoples patriot else
(Nay, placing dogma and our discipline
Above all civil duty), and thereby
Denuding provinces of self-defence ;
In name of such and such a pettiest point
Of doctrine persecuting ruthlessly,
When all by some complacent compromise,
Haply as close to truth as either creed
(I being in error acknowledged, many times !),
Had saved strength for the struggle to sustain
Life of the Church against this Vandal death !
And I have been chief controversialist
Through all my days—O Lord, the heart is sore !—

Forgiveness, Christ ! Did not Thyself, as now

AUGUSTINE

Thy Church, but perish that this world might live?
Did not Thy death ensure to all mankind
The freedom of God's City (by Thy Grace
Against our all-demerit)? And shall now
Thy Church, so wholly Thine, perish in vain?
What are the failures of the private man,
Mine errors multifold upon me proved,
But fair successes in the Plan of God,
Points in procedure of His Providence?
Surely, of human sin original
Accumulated through the thousand years
Of Romè and Godlessness, am I but God's
Exemplar, and the Church that was my work
But instance of the worthlessness of man
Who builds for earth without full faith that God
Will alter earth after His own behest
Nor heed our disappointment! Let mine heart
Be sore, that in its bitterness be proved
The impotence of dreams Pelagian
(Asserting man's too-independent power
Of self-regeneration by good-will!)
Which I opposed, but in opposing made,
By my too-sure assertion of the truth,
Mine own! Ay, Lord! let then mine heart be sore!—

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Let then mine heart be sore ; that Genseric
May blindly represent Thee, wreak Thy will
On Rome's inherited philosophies,
Her dogmas and denials, sophisms all,
Pagan or Christian — and myself have been
Chief churchman of their sophists ! In the world
Is all Thy will. As now unto Thy will
And to the City of God on earth, the Church
Of faith beyond denial, I resign
My Bishophood. — For I have known the sweets
Of the old false way : and the heart is sore.

AVERROËS

WHAT though the Caliph and the questioners
Condemn? Shall that affect philosophy?
Shall the religion of the common mind
Reprove mine Aristotle? He, be it sure,
Were scarce fit food for zealot-ignorance!
The culture of the highest were no cure
For crude fanaticism! At their complaint
Thus much I may admit. — But none the less
Is the religion of the Prophet nought
Considerable to the cultured mind;
Nowise respectable to reasoning!
Let their Mohammed in his purblind zeal
Control and guide them, fervently enough
If quite inconsequently, in a way
Of rectitude sufficient to their wants.
But let them not presume to teach me creeds
Contrary to my reason, when the mind
Under that guidance of the Stagirite
Hath earnestly achieved, beyond their ken,
A knowledge of the universal law
Whereto the Prophet is as nothingness. —
Mohammed, for the ignorant who need

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

A sign and symbol ; but the Stagirite,
In perspicacity of intellect
Preceptor to the cultured : such the way
Of compromise ! I never meant to teach
The universe of lore impersonal
Unto their passionate vulgarity ;
And do regret vulgarity was taught
Truths beyond comprehension of the crowd,
Hence to their blindness false. But, for myself,
Never will I retract ; and I defy
Caliph and questioners to do their worst
In name of ignorance. Philosophy
Shall still sustain me even unto death !

Never will I retract ; but fain would seek
Still further insight of the ways of truth
Absolute and unquestionable ! Yet,
How strange the schism, how lone this intellect
(Supposed an universal operance
Of truth alike in every man of men !)
In segregation from the fond belief
Of thousands of our people ! Them I've judged
For right and wrong, doom'd them to weal or woe
On plain assumption of some common ground

AVERROËS

Self-evident and cognizable alike
By clown or Cadi, of a moral law
Applicable, with grade but of degree,
To child or Caliph — yet at length I find me
An old man isolate, assail'd by all,
If so be, that my cognizance transcends
In kind as in degree their ignorance,
And leaves me with my Stagirite alone,
Gnostic of God's eternal scheme of things
Whereof not one of thousands round me here,
These citizens and priests of Cordova
(Themselves components one and all alike
As soul-partakers in God's intellect),
Hath any inkling ; every intellect,
Save mine, all-unenlighten'd of the truth
Which constitutes them and they constitute !
And thus must I resort to doctrine scarce
Compatible with any universe
Of law-wrought intellect, but in itself
Too like their crude religion : how the mind
Of them who with my reason disagree
May scarce at all partake of final truth,
But rightly rests whence none may hope to lift
Unto the light ; I, in mine arrogance,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Missing that fair solution which might teach
Salvation to the ignorant and still
(Not, as their error, by Mohammed's creed)
Achieve truth-satisfaction ! Compromise
Or no, must my philosophy provide
Religion in the very terms of truth,
Knowledge in passionate belief ; else fail
For me, for them alike. For life is so,
Passionate in and through the Gnosis, still
Cognizant though the blood with faith be mad !
Wherein have I then by philosophy
Miss'd the religion ; wherein doth their creed
Show possibility of competence
Unto the standard of a tested truth ?
For, were their ignorant zeal some adumbration
But of a system they would fain believe ;
And were my consciousness of cosmic law
But applicable to each actual fact
Of personal experience (not as now
Too subtly academic), how might we
But reach some fair agreement, none the worse
Of logic or devotion, for the new
World-reconciliation ? And without
Such reamalgamation might the world

AVERROËS

Well be regarded as no universe
Substance of law nor subject of a faith !

What, then, the requisite ; that faith like theirs
Might truly mean an Aristotle's lore
Adequate to an universe whose God
Can scarce be but as Caliph overruling
The human populace by Cadi's voice
(Mohammed, but some Cadi speaking under
A Caliph, not of Cordova, Bagdad,
Forsooth, yet governing from æther-throne)?
What truth, perchance within the reach of all,
Might yield unto the world eternity
In place of some creation ; to the soul
Universality in place of death
And judgment-doom imagined of their creed ?
And, of my part, what liberality
Of emphasis within the scheme of truth
Learn'd of the Stagirite might bring my law
To daily application and infuse
Enthusiasm of a moral creed
Within the serious teaching ? — Ay, what more true
Than just this yearning of mine intellect
To search and reach unto a loftier plane

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Than any yet achieved, that therein may
My loneliness have solace and my lore
Illumine their religion that it prove
Consonant with philosophy ? What fact
Of faith more patent than their striving toward
Personal satisfaction in some sight
Of system, order, though their order be
Too much anthropomorphic ? Were the truth
Even as the faith a fair development
Out of the mind-indifferent physic-fact
Toward ever yet more universalness
Of implication, whilst, within the growth,
Grows and keeps pace the person — that our passion
And faith-enthusiasm shall nowise fade
Into mere law-sublation, more than shall law
Resolve itself to ignorant caprice :
Were such the reconciliation 'twixt
Their faith, my knowledge : then philosophy
Were some religion, and the crudest creed
Incident to truth-involution ! Such
An universe of growth (here speaks again
The exhaustless Aristotle !) would incite
A truth of passion and a faith of law
In the perpetual striving whereof each,

AVERROËS

As each is in degree sane and aware,
Intendeth truth, believeth in a law,
Impassionate and saving, none the less
Provable universal and in God,
By dint of yearning, ever satisfied
Without creation by a cause beyond
Nor ultimate absorption in the Goal;
But as from first eternal endlessly !
Thus were such world (of them and me at odds)
Nevertheless one single systeming
(Whereby my system were for them not false
But merely as more-than-true beyond their souls)
Of truth according to the Stagirite.
For in the physic-fact original
Lay bedded a conatus which within
Almansor or myself, Ibn Roshd, alike
By satisfaction-seeking is the truth,
The law, the unity of intellect
(Self's implication of the souls of all)
And Godship to the humblest : all alike
By yearning Godward, thus themselves the God
Operant through the stuff primordial
Of individuation ! Though I need
Myself no God beyond such operance

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

(Still less, the mere moon-motive put between
Heaven and earth, the Godhead and the Man !),
May he, the Caliph or the questioner,
Require Mohammed and some æther-throne
Without belying Godhood in himself,
Without disjunction from philosophy.
And therefore may their crude religious cult
(Achieving ample rectitude for them)
Be humanly considerable within
My teaching learn'd now of the Stagirite ! —

Never will I retract. But yet my truth
Comporteth with a fair acknowledgment
(In this so late-won world-enthusiasm)
Even of a truth which by interpretance
I predicate as sure achievement of
Their seeming ignorance. And I may well
(Should persecution finally compel it !)
Avow their Prophet, and be saved thereby
From shameful death, but sully not my soul !
Haply, and teach afresh this more-than-truth
Unto their want-of-truth ; and lead them on,
By means of mere religion, Godwardly !

AQUINAS

THE flesh indeed is weary, though command
Of Pope unto the Council calleth me.
This bulk indeed is weary ; yet the spirit
Must acquiesce though death itself ensue
Of the arduous journey. Whence, expecting death
(Though fearing not the least, and only sad
That God through Pope and Council doth demand
Cessation of my labors ere the Sum
Of all Theology be tabulate),
May I one last redaction make in mind
Of my vast effort in the name of Faith
Which Reason warrants, this my ponderous work
Which open lies before me. For the spirit
Hath strength still and desire to speak the truth
Best, perfected, ere all my speech be done. —

Of God, of Man, and of the God-in-Man,
The *Summa Theologiæ*, the whole
Of human wisdom or the best of it,
Quintessence, at the worst, of every truth !
The *Summa Theologiæ*, man's Reason
At service of the Faith, man's Faith directing

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The operation of a logic-law.

For, as the God is other than His world
Whilst yet its Cause Efficient ; whilst the world
Is otherwise than God, yet work of Him
And God-appetitive : so yet our Reason
Hath appetite of Faith ; and Faith is cause
Of all our proof's discourse. No skill can prove
To Reason-satisfaction aught of truth
Without Faith ; nought of Faith can be conceived
Save as by process of the intellect :
Even as, within the province of our thought
Are universals individuated
By fact-material within the form
Specific-spiritual ; the genera,
Although to human mind unthinkable
Save individuate, none less by law
Of spiritual entity believed
To be angelic, emanate of God,
And from within dominant of our dreams
Of personal independence, by control
Of the mere body ; our spiritual part—
Without all person as we know of person
Within the world — by grace nevertheless
Of God's predestinance (misunderstood

AQUINAS

And not intelligible save to Faith)
Destined to individuation supreme
Whilst death destroys our individual.
Even thus doth Reason (by our intellect)
Prove of its own known insufficiency
The final perfecting achieved by Faith
In high theology. And here the Sum
Of all Theology would stand portray'd
With scheme of God and Man and, for the last
And best (to reconcile the miracle),
The God-in-Man, the Christ upon our earth,
God's intermediary and the world's,
Angel within the body, guardian
Of the truths unthinkable preserved for men
Till death release and open eyes of Faith
To comprehend as now we dimly feel :
Christ, the true demiurge, the compromise
And come-between, required of our mind
For comprehension of the worldliness
Of God or Godliness within the world :
Our intellect's salvation, Reasoning Faith !

Yet (might a mere man dare transgress the bounds
Of Reason's finitude, and, trespassing

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

On Faith, without Faith dare envisage truth
As Christ may, and pronounce of right or wrong
By logical insistence on the ways
Of premise and conclusion !) how might he
(Such heretic blasphemer !) dream a scheme
Unlike the true scheme of our Reason-Faith
Yet sprung of Faith-in-Reason, making world
Some God-in-Man, as even now is Christ
Best explanation of the world He saves ?
I tremble at the subtlety, ashamed
At such temptation. Yet some power within
Impels me and allures to try with test
Of intellect alone the things of Faith
In shame-faced half-apology to God
(As Jesus Christ without apology
In terms of intellect might prove the Faith
Some merely natural Reason of Himself !)
Prying into the mysteries conceal'd —
For all that Revelation we conceive ! —
Of spiritual being. Will not God
Forgive, nor Aristotle disapprove
One who but keenly as the Stagirite
(With Reason sanctified in Christ, for Faith !)
Searcheth the Revelation, as the Greek

AQUINAS

Search'd but the natural knowledge of the soul ?
Will God forgive a Stagirite in Christ
Whose Reason, waiving Faith, is more than Faith ?
And must not any search conclude at last
In Christ ; and need the Christian be afraid ?
But, ha ! were not the Reason's stumbling-block
And Faith-compulsion just this fact of Christ
Supposed the mediary demiurge
Partaking of both natures, God and Man ?
Himself the intercessionary aid
In that dilemma of the infinite
At touch with finite : God, cause of a world ?
Yet, with the goal of logic-in-the-Faith
So clear before me, let me logically
Without recourse to Faith prove both of God
And Man that sans Christ's intermediacy
Were neither God nor Man as God and Man
Must be conceived unto our intellect
If they be verily truth-known at all
For finite-infinite as Christ is known.
Though yet, what revolution in the ways
Of premise and conclusion, of our proof
Itself, if so be Christ be provable
Unto our Reason, as without a Faith,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

For actual truth of body, both, and soul !
What alteration of the scheme of truths
Divine or human, as the human soul
Might comprehend the intercession new !
But shows not Christ supremely thinkable
(Example of the perfect natural life
Of Man in the world at unison with God —
If sinful none, yet humanly as finite !)
Without resort to Faith in any kind :
Himself that very form-material,
That spiritual-body, genus-fact
Of individual specific still
Because divine, personal yet and owning
A world relational of membership
Whereof the Christ-identity in flesh
Were finite member, but which as a world
Were nought than Christ's inferr'd pragmatical
Being, as Christ is conscious of the whole
Within His sympathy, and died therefor ?
What ultimate Reason, shorn indeed of Faith
Yet needing none ; solving antinomy
Of finite-infinite (scarce by pantheism,
But by pan-Christhood !), of God and the world
Which otherwise were noway reconciled ;

AQUINAS

Solving the mystery not as I deem'd
Through mediation merely — which would yield
But duplication of the paradox
Of infinite from finite still demark'd
Within Christ's person and none less within
Relation of the God or world to Him —
Not merely by intrusion as between
Two partialities, but by conclusion
Of both, sublate, in Christhood ; so, by proving
Christ-intermediary but a name
For God or world rightfully understood,
Self-comprehended by the all-seeing soul
Of Faith-transcendent logic : how no world
Might be, save if in every membership
Infinitely completed and inferr'd
Interminably through all membership
From each self-focus personal of truth ;
And therefore in each membership divine,
Howe'er by postulate's hypothesis
Also all-human and a work-created
Indeed ! How no God (spare the blasphemy !)
Might be, save personal and therefore part
Of His own handiwork, explaining it
As He is self-explain'd in terms of truth

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Worldwise, and known in every truth as Christ! —
Thus far, for Reason working without Faith
Unto expression of an hyper-Faith
By logic: no mere exclusion, yea and nay,
Which by the choice 'twixt two coördinates
(Truth and untruth!) by severating them
Selectionwise obliterates to nought
Even the supposed distinction; but a proof
Conclusive of each part as also whole
By differential inference, by oneness
In virtue of an incoördination
Final, nowise selective *inter se*
To indetermination, but distinctly
This and all others, positive-negative
United, infinite and finite both;
Christ only! — world and God alike but name
For truth's two aspects; intermediation
In propria persona, God-and-Man:
Who neither, save in Christ, were Man or God,
World or Creator; but in Christ are so!

Lo! by the Faithless logic stands approved
The very mystery which Faith alone
Can but pound, which Reason led by Faith

AQUINAS

Can but pronounce by miracle achieved
And best accepted without questioning ;
Yet which the Reason, freed of fear for Faith,
Proudly elaborates to perfect proof
And solvent-satisfaction ! How might I
Justify then the angelologism
Of demiurge interpolate between
A God and world, a sheer Faith and a Reason,
A genus and an individual ;
When in fair truth are God and Man alike,
World or the World-Creator, person or
Species, incomprehensible save as
Themselves the demiurge, the God-in-Man,
The genus-individual, the person
Yet comprehensive of a fact without
Which scarce were fact save as we reason of it,
Which scarce were truth save for the soul that sees ?
How justify the Christ call'd mystery
(All being but Christ in that we reason of Him,
And thereby *in persona* mediate
Ourselves 'twixt any God or world whate'er —
Which were not severally God nor world !)
Save on assumption of a God, a world
Separate and irreconcilable

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

By any Christhood — as my proof hath shown ? —
Alas ! for this my *Theologiæ*
Summa ! I may not work upon it more
Until the Faith return in which I wrought
Blindly perchance, but reverently far
Beyond this mood of Reason-frowardness
Wherein this hour hath moved me to blaspheme !
Alas ! for this mine undertaking ! Christ,
Canst Thou allow that any truth of Thee
Shall come to nought, that any labor'd love
Of God, felt humbly as the child might feel
God's inspiration, shall in blasphemy
End and be self-destroy'd ? Perchance mankind
May take the labor and the law of Faith,
The love-humility, and let it lie
For proof of inspiration — nor perceive
The rational induction as from Christ
His comprehension and example shown
Self-cogitant beyond all mystery
(Impertinence unfit for merely man !);
The logic-inference of Faith-less lore,
This hour hath shown me ? There the *Summa* lies
Unfinish'd, never from my hand and heart
To receive sentence more ; for fear my fall

AQUINAS

May self-betray upon the patient page
The intellect's rebellion unawares !
There the work lies. And I must undertake
My journey to the Council to defend
Our Christianity ; though heresy
Gnaw at mine heart, and fain would I be dead
Liefer than bear dispute where soul herself
Hath died down unto embers with the weak'ning
Of my vast body strangely sick to death.
Rather a death upon the arduous road,
Though sick at soul beside and self-despairing
Of any absolution, than blaspheme
In folly of dispute where no belief
Gives basis to the assertion. Fondly, Lord !
I pray Thee, bless this journey with release
By death ; that, ere the Council, shall mine eyes
Of Faith re-open, and my blasphemy
End with some resurrection ! E'en though flame
Of Hell receive my spirit, yet, O Lord !
Compel not to the public sacrilege
Of double-tongued dispute ! My *Summa* lies
A monument at least of piety,
An edification to the centuries.
Grant, in the name of this, release by death !

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Grant for the sake of labor wrought in love
That no exposure ruin that I writ
In humble service of Thy mystery,
But which in weakness of my body now
To blasphemy have secretly betray'd!

LUTHER

A MIGHTY stronghold is our Lord of Hosts,
A refuge and a very present help
In time of trouble. — Were this Wartburg sure
Without God's guardance and my trust in Him?
God guardeth best those that have trust in Him.

God's guardianship by this my trust in Him!
These move the world anew, these shake the towers
Of thousand Wartburgs that have not my faith.
The fabrics of the works of many men
Burst unto dust but by my living faith.
Saint Thomas and the Schools, bishop and Pope
Blind to the beauty of sweet Augustine,
Awake at the word of one poor recreant priest
Teutonic, ay, titanic by a faith.
'I can no more. God help me.' — And in that
Word's intimate reliance came the light,
The truth's assurance. And I turn'd and stepp'd
A little from them into God's sunshine
And Germany's free country; and am free,
Free of the spirit limitless in God,
Though of my body and my body's works

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Incarcerated by a patron's care
Lest harm befall. I cheerfully allow
The imprisonment that so the soul stay free ;
Concealment, that the world through me may
 know
God's wonderworking by faith's grace alone !

Doubtless the way of man is daily work.
God's grace vouchsafeth not where gluttony,
The battenning of lone convented folk
Burdens the laboring brethren of the field
Or sweating city or the mining-pit
To the support of idle sluts and drones.
Doubtless the way is work, as I shall show
By fair example set in God's good time,
Laboring, wedding, fathering stalwart sons
And daughters to be ministers of God
In the world and vessels of His faith and grace.
Surely the way is work, mistake me not,
Ye future freely working humankind,
For any apostle of an idleness !
Yet are the works of man but vanity
By sin original, the ways of man
A mockery against the ways of God,

LUTHER

Save faith transcend the paltry falling-short,
Trust in the universal rule of truth
(Truth, valent but by belief the all-powerful !)
Absolve the error, and our penitence
Be perfect triumph, not by merit earn'd
Of scourge and penance, but by assurance, through
Christ's intercession and the heart of God
(That intercession and that heart within me)
Compassionate of His lost handiwork,
Assurance of salvation unto those
Who wholly love and suffer — and are glad.
For thus is penance privately entail'd,
A contriteness of spirit, a pact between
The soul and God, man's proper stand of soul
In the presence compassionate though awful yet
Of Him his maker : not a rule imposed
Extrinsic of interpretance by phrase
Of Peter or the Pope's usurping screed.
The Bull of Pope's-indulgence were as nought ;
The strict monastic discipline no source
Of purification, save the church-within,
The cloister of confession in the heart,
Impose the ordinance, to show all men
The power in grace that trust hath o'er the soul.

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

God's guardianship is but my trust in Him,
The power in grace that faith hath o'er the soul! —

Nay, do I hear detractors who exclaim:

- 'A thousand churches for a thousand men
- 'This Martin fain would build: no Church at all
- 'Compelling, overruling, yielding peace
- 'By questionless authority — a man,
- 'This Luther, who would substitute for God
- 'On earth in the Church the passion-rule of self,
- 'Discord and chaos come again.' How now?
- I answer: 'Where the way of each is right
- 'In personal cognizance of the voice of God
- 'Can come but concord, an accord of each
- 'In his mere time and place with timeless, whole
- 'Ordinance and establishment beyond
- 'The petty understanding of the mind!'
- (Ah! dared I say: 'Yet human none the less,
- 'Yet temporal in mine eternal soul'!) —

Thus will a Church arise, not consecrate
To scarce-disguised idolatries, not back'd
By fiction, legends of a spirit-world
Man scarce hath seen, and lived; but ordered in
Community of purpose to oppose

LUTHER

Presumption, blasphemous assumption of
God's office on the part of any man
Over his fellows, each of whom by grace
Of faith is godly (and no God beside
In the world save operant as healing faith) —
Community of protest to be free
And worship, each communicant, by joy
Of the inward light, howe'er it come to him,
Perfervid, wholesome, stalwart, practical
Through the world of God which is the world of men
And women, vessels of His faith and grace.

O bountiful earth-nature ! Field and sky,
Clouds and the forest-clouds upon the face
Of the field as heaven ! O toilers in my sight,
Women and men providing, from the field
And forest, sustenance to rear your young,
Sinews of faith and grace ! O, hear ye me ! —
This Wartburg falleth as the works of men
Must ever fall. Yet, firm by providence
Of Him who made me, by zeal of him who put me
A prisoner here assured for safer times —
Nay, through my faith ! — this Wartburg still shall
stand

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

When all save God and soul are pass'd away :
A stronghold by the guardance of our God —
By faith of the spirit — symbol on earth of God :
Stronghold ; high Refuge ; very Present Help !

LOYOLA

AY, ad majorem Dei gloriam,
His splendor in the world as evidenced
In Peter's power through the See of Rome,
And in preferment of this Company,
Mine Order and myself creator of it!
Unto that end all means are profitable
And righteous whatsoever, if the end
But best be served : a logic practical,
An ethic Macchiavellian (Christ save
Its pagan perpetrator!), sane, self-proved.
And to that end is much self-evident
Of ways and method organizing men :
All to be builded of obedience,
Blind substitution of command for cause,
Discipline overruling reason ; yea,
Conscience obliterate in servitude ? —
Amen ! Were any conscience other than
Acknowledged servitude to rules of right ?
Might any rules of right stand more confirm'd,
Establish'd beyond peradventure, than
Decretals of the very Vicar of Christ
(Christ but the Vicar of God), and thus through him

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Orders, commands of each superior
From General down to novitiate —
Straight substitute for God where otherwise
Were little leading and no feeblest light —
As evidence Hussites and Lutherans ?

Thus I establish it : obedience
In furth'rance of the greater glory of God
On earth, obedience without any let
Nor hindrance of conviction personal
Beyond conviction that to serve is right.
Thus I establish it to high and low
Of the Company — yet what of mine own self ?
What of the least of them, stood he as I
Commanding, without book to bind behest,
Freely, dependent upon God alone
Who speaks not plainly, leads by little light
And suffers interpretance equivocal ?
Am I obedient, or were such an one,
Below me, but obedient who stood
Suddenly faced of some fresh circumstance
Not fair foreseen, not pre-provided for ?
Can conscience (and originality
Be requisite !) be, after all, the source

LOYOLA

Of truth and best for service even of God ?
For, lo! if every means be justified
That leadeth to God's end, what surety
Save conscience can convince (my case at least)
Of purity of purpose, 'propriateness
Of circumstance and accident unto
The goal and substance — what but reasoning faith
(Not blind obedience !) can assure the soul
Of justification unto any end,
Of true fulfilment of the perfect plan
Itself: *majorem Dei gloriam?* —
Lay I not sick in anguish many days,
A warrior not yet dedicate to God,
But fill'd of the fume of the camp, and ignorant
In every line of learning ; when upon me
There came a call of conscience, not of man,
And bade me unto vigils and the oath
Of Mary: that chastity and poverty
Which hath been in my case sufficient to
The saintly life — beyond obedience ?
Have I not many years by diligent zeal
As student late in life amass'd in mind
The myriad lore of universities,
Making myself as teacher unto men,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Inditing with a wisdom sorely earn'd
The spirit-regimen that makes of man
(By vigil, apparition, visual trance)
Best devotee, most valued proselyte
Of the Order, Fellow of my Company?
And hath this life-career been otherwise
Than instigate of conscience thoroughly
Without obedience to any man,
But rather in face of all authorities
Compelling even Pope and Holy See
To slow acceptance of the proffer'd help,
Reluctant permit to be serviceable?
Thus have I wrought, without obedience,
Better than had I been obedient
To any call my conscience disapproved:
Conscience, that sense of universal right,
Of God, within the individual soul!
And am I otherwise than other men?

With that interrogation stands or falls
The Company of Jesus. It must stand!—
I, then, am otherwise than other men,
Not subject to the law I needs impose
On other men unto the glory of God.

LOYOLA

Unique am I; to other men, as God
To me; as soul to body (no Pope himself —
Elective, not soul-chosen — were as I
Christ's representative!); and men must be
Obedient to my precepts to serve Christ
And me who serve best Christ by ruling them.
All were as Hussites and as Lutherans
Alike who lack'd this special light of law
Which, emanate from God within my soul,
Is conscience within me, but unto them
Command imperative. The vow shall stand
A sign unto the ages; servitude
Made glorious: questionless obedience
Even unto death and sin — the sin absolved
By my transcendence who pronounce all sin
Committed by command but righteousness,
Upbuilding this our Company, upholding
The See of Rome to greater glory of God.
So let the justification be by works,
Corroborative of the theorem.
Let results speak and prove what-means-soe'er
Appropriate to the end approved of God
Toward making men wholly God's puppetry.
And (as mine Order shall absorb mankind)

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Myself shall be (in humblest reverence,
I dare to trust) the last and greatest Man,
Creator of the sainthood militant:
Myself, prime Saint without inheritor.

XAVIER

THE Goans and the Cochinese have been
And poor pearl-seekers of the Fishing Coast
Chiefly my field of labor under God
Since first from Lisbon on these sapphire seas
I voyaged, obedient to my General
Loyola, loyal to the call of Christ.
Here of these glistening Indies hath my work
Prosper'd and brought prosperity of soul
Unto these simple folk, dark-skin'd, soft-voiced,
Who needed only Christ and Christian faith,
The tongue of truth and leading unto God
To be so easily heart-taught and saved —
So easily that some must e'en misconstrue
My modest ministry for miracle !
By hundreds or by thousands may I count
The sheep of this new pasture : not enough
Where millions, daily cowering, wail before
Dark idols in sick-smelling champak wreaths
And withering jasmines ; not enough where bells
Harsh-jangled and the fume of bitter blood
From burnt flesh-offering, faugh ! human and beast
Offend God's nostril and annoy His ear.

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The Goans and the Cochinese in part
Or poor pearl-seekers of the Fishing Coast
I count among Christ's children. What of those
Whom only want of opportunity,
The chance prevention of enlightenment
(For chance it seems, howe'er ordain'd of God!),
Benights and dooms at death as here on earth
Unto some Hell of dusk idolatry?

There are who do entreat the dark-of-skin
As by necessity the dark-of-soul,
Forgetful of that Æthiopian
Whom Philip did baptize; and of this proof,
If proof were needed, now of Malabar.
Not so doth God who sendeth me to save
Through grace of Christ the sinners dark of skin
Proven less dark of soul than many a man
Cradled beneath the bounty of the Babe!
And yet the grave perplexity remains
Of ignorance and wickedness foredoom'd
In these God's folk-potential save for my
Fortuitous advent, insufficient zeal
Which scarce sufficeth for one millionth part
Of men's salvation, in these Indies now

XAVIER

Alive, and toucheth nothing of those, dead
Since Christ, yet unforewarn'd of pains of Hell !
Doth God, though leading through Ignatius' word
And my obedience, suffer yet His sheep
To wait the chance of men's infirmity
(My constancy at proof ; my health, perchance,
Subject to every tropical unease)
For soul-salvation or eternal death ?
Doth God set man, myself, a task without
Limit or possibility wherethrough
Alone by infinite accomplishment,
Executance instantaneous, might I
Acquit me worthily, achieve in God
Aught adequate to human righteousness ?
The mystery seems irresolvable :
I, honestly devoted, doom'd at best
To infinite dishonor and defeat
For want of some omnipotence ; these men
Of Indies doom'd, save only two or three
From many, to some Hell by my default !
I voyage onward to extend God's name
And Christ's high purpose unto lands remote
And men of hues uncouth (Moluccans ; else
The yellow Mongol race ?) — to spread the seed

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

No doubt ! But what of very voyaging ?
What of this gradual inadequacy,
This perishing of millions whilst I earn
The infinite saviorhood for one or two,
And for myself — so moderate must be men's
Criterion ! — some crown of saintliness ?
The problem spreads, inclusive of all ways
Of God with man, of man within his soul :
The pitiable mean accomplishment —
Self-shamed ; there lurks the crux of this dismay ! —
For lack of infinite power ; and therethrough
The doom of innocence on every hand ;
Doom of those unconverted and myself ;
Doom likewise in degree of every man.
The problem is in brief : Man, with a soul
God-like responsible, yet is not God ;
How then be worthy of our God, yet Man ?

Behold, as in this faith-extremity
I cast myself upon this wavering plank
Prone upon knees to pray — and all the air
Is full of inspiration (and yon men,
The ship's swarth company, retire apart
Leaving me space for privileged communion),

XAVIER

And under me I feel the heave of the sea
Interminable, and above my head
The blue interminable and the clouds
Ceaselessly travelling athwart the face
Of heaven — and all is kind unto my thought
To foster, strengthen, and protect in faith
By influence beneficent and peace
In element-performance under God —
So under God upsurges in my soul
A clarity, a fair infinitude
Of aspect and of outlook. Though I be
Inly foredoom'd, yet God Himself did take
Finitude thus upon Him, and in Christ
Did touch of men some score in Galilee
(And they were fisher-folk as these of Ind!)
And in Jerusalem, but not in Rome
Nor yet in Goa nor Negapatam.
I voyage on, my very little space
Beyond the Christ, as Christ His little space
Travell'd and touch'd upon the surging throng
But here and there : for all the infinite need !
I have learn'd God : how God's mere infinite
Were emptiness, and nothing were perform'd.
Were all complete (as some sage Singhalese

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Themselves asserted, following the creed
Of Prince Asoka from some antique time !) ;
How finitude entails accomplishment ;
And God the infinite Accomplisher
Became of inmost self-necessity
(Nay, was from first, as Athanasius saith)
Essential Finitude, the Man of men !
The mystery were thus resolvable :
That, God being also finitude, so man,
In virtue of each least accomplishment
By will and purpose, effort to perform
Insistent, conscientised, were as God Himself
Christlike establisher of heaven-on-earth,
Cause of infinity. And, in degree
As each feels failure, is infinitude
In him establish'd, and through him in all
Who hearken to his tale of Man the Christ.
And, for the rest, shall Christ not yet suffice
In some long purgatory by His grace
Not unbeneficently to redeem
The dark-of-soul, whatever outward hue
Their ignorance hath worn under the sun ? —
Some ignorant might well enough maintain
The fantasy that even without Christ,

XAVIER

Through their sad Gautama or Krishna fierce,
Each swarth idolater doth save himself
By faith in idol-gods upon the earth
(Their faith, as mine, the test of saving truth !)
And effort to live manfully by them ?
But I, I value God reveal'd, not dream'd :
Not I ; I voyage in the name of Christ !

PALESTRINA

THE mandate of Pope Pius, the decree
Of Council, finally the Cardinals,
Those eight commission'd, Borromeo most
And Vitellozzi, pressing with appeal
That music in the Church — surely a clear
High contrapuntal canon of command ! —
That music in the Church shall be reform'd
And I reform it — by formality
Fresh-liberated, free of the Flemish mode
Of intricate conceit, yet quite by rule
Of law newly-devised with dignity
In place of decoration ; consecution
Appropriate to expression of the creed
Or service, offertory, praise, or prayer,
Rather than some profane inanity
Of madrigal translated, out of point,
To vulgarize the heavenly acclaim.
A fair reform ! Yet surely I have heard
Of one who, barbarous German renegade,
Hath undertaken to reform far more
Than merely music ; hath denied both Pope

PALESTRINA

And Council and the holy Cardinals ;
Denied authority of men o'er men
As intermediate authorities
'Twixt man and God (an overt blasphemy
Decrying God-establish'd hierarchies
Essential to religion and the Church —
Fault damnable), and so hath reft the Church
In twain with his reforms ; and music too :
Reduced to lawless maundering, as they say. —
A situation strange : authority
Demanding of mine art that at the word
Of Pope or Council or of Cardinal
(With threat of abolition should she fail !)
Music shall yield, and yield the world a law ;
Mine art, obedient to authority,
Become authority as God to man !

At first acceptance (God forbid the fault
Of heresy !) yet find I in my soul
Somewhat of Luther : keen to push reform ;
Whilst as creator, artist in mine heart,
Indignant at the connoisseur-command —
At the word of ignorance (placed ne'er so high)
Demanding this or that accomplishment

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Out of the spirit that should yield to God
Alone (not man !) the satisfaction of
Its innermost devotion. I adore
Man Borromeo, were he ne'er so saint,
In manner to award him prayer and praise
Out of the fulness of a reverent soul ?
Doth any proud position in the Church
Give artist-insight such that at the word
Shall spring forth pæan from the barren brass ?
Almost would I too tear the Church in twain
Than make my music at a churchman's nod !
I fancy, too, those tunes of Martin's make
Are not so bad as Cardinals would claim.
I deem there must be something said therein
Straightforward, suited to solemnity,
Appropriate to a service meant for God :
Perceiving how the man who speaks in them
Speaks as the artist-soul original,
All-independent of the fear of man
And making music in the name of God !
Somehow the case is not so wholly clear
Despite that counter-canon of command :
Whether it were not best to scorn command
And serve but God, well as my will may do,

PALESTRINA

All-independent of the fear of man ?
Music were made, at worst, for music's best
(And therefore best for prayer and praise of God),
Were I to make by impulse as I must
(Regardless of the Church, her proud demand)
An earnest, genuine, heart-yearning song
Soaring to God's own throne, not lost athwart
Their aisles and transepts of the Lateran.

An earnest, genuine song, made beautiful
In all the beauties of the sanctuary —
The Church her proud demand, even as mine !
Mine ! for am I the man, or mine the mode
To be as Martin and his homely psalm ?
Am not I, working at my music's best
And quite regardless of the fear of man,
Yet, as spontaneous creator, still
Source of an hierarchy, in myself
Church, Council, Cardinal, and Pope ; my song
A counter-canon of authority
Given, regiven, verberant abroad
In firm reëcho from the primal theme
(The primal God) reiterant and still
Reiterant down through God's servitors

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The highest, Pope and Cardinals, and then
The lowlier dignitaries to the least :
So aggrandizing ever the glory of God
By imitation to the outermost
Boundaries of His realm illimitable ?
Is not the method of the Church mine own,
And am not I the man who in myself
Sum up, express, pour forth (as Cardinal
Or Pope or Council never may pour forth)
The spirit of Peter, the transmission of
The splendor apostolic, consecrate
In laying on of hands, crown upon crown
Blessing the consecution of command ?
Such the best freedom, such the late-found
law
Reforming every old formality
By fresh insistence on the power of God
In Holy Church her wondrous formulæ
Of intervention, man and man between
Each man and God — even the Pope supreme
Only as God, the Last, is over him :
God, the God-given motive in my mind ! —
No more of Martin's music — good, no doubt,
For him ; but not for me the master-hand

PALESTRINA

Of music apostolic, laying on
My manumission of high prayer and praise. —

This Borromeo, Vitellozzi, Pope
And Council, what is it they crave of me ?
A Mass, to be exemplar to the age
Of meaning, music made appropriate
To Holy Church, her use and services ?
I am' the man and mine the mode ; I make
Them three — a trinity, for Cardinals
And Pope and Council : representing God !

AKBAR

THERE is no God but God ; and I, El Akbar,
Am representative of God on earth
As in the heavens the Sun. Whence to the
Sun,
Celestial Emperor, lord paramount
Of skies and potentate of God's decrees
As written nightly in the further stars—
Whence to the nearest Word of all God's words
Interpretable of the astrologers
I daily make prostration : morn and noon,
Evening and at the midnight when ends both
And re-begins the cycle of the skies :
Four times (a number perfect, as 't is form'd
Of a self-birth in symmetry of cause
All ways) I, Akbar, Emperor of earth,
Worshipping heavenward as the realm of earth
Shall worship me ; that through both Emperors,
The heavenly as the earthly, shall the power
Of God be heralded and manifest,
Proclaim'd devotionally by the act
And faith of every servant of His name.

AKBAR

There is no God but God; and I, El Akbar,
Am God on earth as in the heavens the Sun. —

'T is not enough that God should be on earth
As any merely mild well-temper'd man,
Or any struggler by the savage sword
(As Jesus or Muhammad), not enough
That He appear in vision, some mere dream
Of power in contradiction to a fact
Of impotence and failure as of him
The Nazarene, else to some pettiness
Of desert carnage and the sack of towns.
(My father, thus, the pitiful Humayun,
My grandsire, bold Babar, conqueror,
Had rather been the deity to worship,
Than I, consolidator, self-supreme !)
'T is not enough that God should be on earth
Despised, rejected, else held fearfully
In hate enforced because of spear and sword
Wielded insatiate. But God must be
On earth in majesty and reverence,
In power that is so beyond dispute
(Mine obvious right, not any ancestor's !)
That, being all-unopposed, 't is infinite.

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The wisdom and the clemency are mine,
Made admirable but by the power within
To scourge earth ; power, in mightier self-restraint !
Not as Muhammad who but smote and slew ;
Not as this Jesus of the Frankish monks
Himself but smitten and spat upon and slain
(Not as bold Babar nor the meek Humayun !) :
But as the God, confirming the divine
In mine own person, I may smite but will not
Because I am beyond the sword of man !
Enough for Jesus or that Arab chief ;
Clods, of no Persian culture, Indic wealth ;
No Jew despised, no lesser-Tamerlane
Of wrath and unrestraint can be as God
Divine on earth. I, Akbar, am divine.

So much for creeds of earth. Shall those of heaven,
These strange idolatries of Hindu slaves,
Allure me with their multitude of gods,
Unless some God be worthier than the rest,
Some symbol of their all-being provide
(Mix'd with the meaning of the Magian cult)
A practical performance and a prayer
Meet for this teeming people, them whose toil

AKBAR

Is of the field and forest, of the rain
And shine, all sky-dependent ? From the creed
Of that Muhammad and the Nazarene
Accept the old Hebraic unity
Of power, though not in terms of them I scorn
As humanly inadequate to be
God-like, but in some nature-sign to show
These Hindu vassals that divinity
Which I and those selected of my court
Must seek and find nowhere than in myself ?
Let the sun serve, sith it is known to them
By long-continued custom as a god
(Creator doubtless by some means occult
Of clouds and rains as of the parchèd dust)
Whereto their reverence doth naturally
Direct their prayer : that I may build upon
Their superstition and credulity
A further confirmation of the truth
I gradually have evolved in mind :
My Godship in my kingship absolute.—
The Zarathushtrians have given excuse
For this, the Parsis, fire-worshippers
Whose tongue is Persian and whose heart is pure,
Whose priests are persons of a liberal mind

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Fit to be functionaries of a cult
That finds its patron in the Great Mogul! —
And lo! into fire (let it but be believed)
Our souls shall alter at the last decease
And wander in spirit as a purity
Through all things, quickening the life of each.
A future fitter than a paradise,
A merit meeter than that judgment-bar
Imagined of those occidental creeds
Which cramp divinity with more and less
Of wrath or love and leave the soul a slave!

So, let the fire be for an holy sign;
And let the arch-priest, the sage and sweet Vizir,
Bring forth the focus-glass that fire may fall
From heaven upon the fuel here prepared
As sacred hearth and shrine of empire.
And let the courtiers and the people pay
Respect to each and every lamp at night
In courtyard or in palace, and receive
Sun with obeisance; as example shown
Of my prostration publicly commands. —
Behold! in mosque or church or fane alike
Is God but Akbar as He dwells on earth.

AKBAR

And of this Akbar is the Sun in heaven
High representative, a Power, a Fire,
Focus and unity of every flame,
Emperor, Potentate, all-absolute. —
There is no God but God ; and I, El Akbar,
Am God on earth as in the heavens the Sun.
Allabu Akbar — meaning : God is Great,
Akbar is God — doubly declaring both !

SHAKESPEAR

AH me ! mine own success I cannot reap !
The groundlings flatter ; and I set me straight
To write them just another such a piece
As pleased — yet no jot can my stint repeat.
So through these weary seasons hath it been
(Belike I jest, yet in mine own despite !) —
No respite from a fond progressiön.
Though to deaf Heaven I bootless cry to keep
My mind unmovèd, still must I undo
All flattery, all praise obliterate
With some new strange experiment to win
The general — which, when their ear is won,
E'en with its own slow-earnèd half-success
Turns all attention, swerves all fair revèue
From earlier sore-snatch'd popularity.
Say it be won, the top of admiration :
Othello hath no peer. Yet, seek as hard
As wit may work to trick their wits again
With any story of Boccaccio,
With any old-wife's winter's evening's tale,
The manner alters and the labor 's lost ;
Until the groundlings (fickle as the gods,

SHAKESPEAR

Yet favorable !) laud me the novelty —
And then Othello's occupation 's gone,
And all is unwell though it endeth well !
To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow
(Some humor find I in this high-flown strain
Stealing the thunder-cloud of mine own bombast
To vent this spleen with, mocking so myself !),
To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow,
Each day begins the business all anew ;
And of the yesterdays no whit remains
To arm me against seas of troubles new-stirr'd
Betwixt me and the starvelings of the pit
With every offering of a new-writ play.
Ah ! could I twice re-write, re-vamp the old —
'T were to be playwright then, if not to be
Poet : the question — is the play the thing ?
Would I might borrow and lend e'en of myself
As of this Ariosto. Fain would I lose
The loan itself (if not these friends therewith !),
Sailing on flood of tide in mine affairs
Rough-hew them though I should. The humor takes me,
The thing's conceit. And yet 't would never do.
I am no playwright ; though the pit cry out
On top of flattery, still I write beyond

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Their moment's gust, still unto heaven's gates
Send larks ascending, still reap contumely
At every first-night—till the twelfth night shines !
And now am I turned punster, with ado
O'er nothing yearning (ay, beshrew my soul
For arrant knavery !) toward those comedies
In error, which ne'er I may make again,
Which paid so handsomely for house and field !
Haply these chronicles of British kings
(I have my share in), writ indifferent ill
With help of friends, may bring in some revèue
(So full of sounding words and stirring deeds !)
And keep the wife's pot boiling as the stew
On witches' heath ? But by my forthright art,
Ah me ! I cannot reap mine own success —
But mouth and mow anent some mad old Lear,
Some whoreson Cleopatra in her cups ;
Jesting at mine own impotence to be
Up doing at my business of the stage —
A passable actor, marry ; but a fool
Not fit to know a failure at first-hand !

But now more honorably with mine art —
Belike a way 'll be found in fair excuse,

SHAKESPEAR

Some proof of method in this maddening shift
From profitable comedy or some
Tragic impressive popularity
To, ever subtlier and involvèd more,
A high romancing o'er the general —
This caviare I offer them for meat ?
Mayhap I have my reason though my play
Hath none ? There may be something in this soul
Of honest Will the rhymester, as of Jaques
In Arden, though his greenwood's London town,
That groweth all regardless of the want
For reimbursement ; else, of beggary ?
To London came I and was one of them,
These players and purveyors of bad verse —
Or worse ; to London ; and have been from first
A peer if no small potentate among them,
Adapting to the method of the time
(Each time serves for the matter born in it !)
My daily converse or my nightly song
In wassail with the rest — as natural.
Perchance I am two persons out of tune ;
And this that lifts to speak before the bar
Of wise examining within me now
The nobler of the jangling ill-match'd twain ?

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Then let it speak and soothe to harmony
(By overmastering of the discord harsh)
The music that is melody indeed,
Sweet reasoning and understanding sane !
A man that hath not music — in himself
Is beggary though he breathe the wooing air
Of kingly palaces and crowds acclaim
His pettiest perfections ! — So, to Lear !
On with the petulant, pitiful old man
So unlike idols of our England's stage,
So lost a king, yet so inevitable
Unto the shaping insight as I labor.
On, to that infinite variety
(Eternity still in her lips and eyes)
Which custom hath not staled nor witherèd,
My Serpent of Old Nile, bred o' the sun
And slime, not of the town ! For I obey
Necessity, must tell Othello's tale
(This truculence of rhythm in my heart),
Though he the Moor be set at naught thereby.
Nothing must I extenuate nor warp
In malice — trusting that such stuff as dreams
Are made on must as dreams be builded up
Out of the cloud-capt high imaginings

SHAKESPEAR

Of multitudinous truths extemporized
Of fantasy looking before and after —
The hues of resolution richlier blown
With every cast of thought. That thus no whit
Ought I my stint of scripture to repeat
As playwright flattering the groundlings' whim,
To make the angels weep ; but I, proud man,
Now manumitted of the fear of the pit,
Dress'd in the poet's quick authority
Eternalize my tongue ! Not monuments
Of princes shall outlive mine impotent rhyme
That, dying with the utterance, lifts again
To grandeur witless of a withering ! —

The King hath e'en commanded us to play
That prurient trick'd-up stew of Troilus
Another time. I will not play it for him.
I've earn'd enough for competence without
More ribaldry. — On with this doomèd Lear !

DESCARTES

Cogito, ergo sum! — Gassendi hath
And Hobbes, sour exile, none too courteously,
Question'd the ultimatum; and the rest
Murmur of God. Mine answers have I sent
(All that I care or dare say publicly!)
In satisfaction to the crude complaints.
And yet myself I cannot satisfy,
Stirr'd by objection to subject my creed
To keener criticism, a scrutiny
More penetrating than the best of theirs.
Mine axiom stands invulnerable. Now
Let me best be my critic, through my faith
In that self-certainty, allowing nought
Contrary to that primal postulate
To mar the logic-harmony; but all
'Soe'er of God or world, let it remain
Only if consonant with final truth.
Cogito, ergo sum! — Upon that rock
I rear me, though the very heavens fall.

Cogito, ergo sum! — The vortices
Of motion borne upon the stream of time

DESCARTES

Contain no such criterion of truth
Immediate, conclusive. Nay, nor God
(Despite His putative eternity)
Himself affords such certainty as this.
That I have weakly yielded to the whim
Of flattering outworn divinity,
Allowing 'truthfulness of will in God'
To supplement the self-won principle
For guarantee of certainty, but brings
Shame to my soul, confusion to my creed
In contrast to the plain nobility
Of that enunciation clear, distinct,
Which springs in introspection. '*Cogito*' —
Therefore all truths 'soever of my soul
Hold valid by inference of the human fact
Of self-identity immediate.
And God, so far as any need inheres
Of guarantee against an ultimate doubt,
Were supererogatory to my soul,
Mere source of ultimate confusedness.
Within mine intimate discovery
Of doubt-transcending entity no flaw
Demands God-resolution. This my soul
Is absolute ; and, if somewise of God

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

(As even I were scarce prepared as yet
To contradict), hath no dependency
By any virtue of residual doubt ;
But is itself final criterion
Of clearness and distinctness. All without
The soul must seem indeed a source confused
Of indirection and analogy,
Fit object of the sweeping skepticism
To which I aye subject it. If within
Is certainty, without 's but theory
Interpretative of sensations scarce
Distinguishable, scarce beyond the beasts'
Referable to reason. And, for this,
Were God no supererogation, but
Basic necessity, an warranty
Be wanted, an the passions of the sense
May anywise be clarified, subdued,
And brought to order and a systeming.
God may be Mind or no. His may be mine
Absolute insight of self-being, yet
(As His — as supplemental to the proof
Within — beyond first incidence of mine)
Not needed, nowise indispensable
To mine assurance. But without the self

DESCARTES

Were chaos, save some ordering God-will
Creates, haply sustains, and orders all things
Contrary to deception and impels
The animal-spirits correctly to report
Unto the soul in brain-stuff situate
The manner of world-motions ; which, save only
Mediance of the gland pineal, might
Nowhere enact on thought an alterance
Nor offer any information through
Machineries of sense. But by God's will
(And only by God's will miraculous)
Doth` motion indicate upon the soul
Its indirections, its analogies
Unto interpretation, skepticism
And theory approximating toward,
But never realizing, certainty
Beyond some dubitation. Save for God,
Might the man-mind in vain essay an insight
Of worldly things, sans God beyond all reach
Of any knowledge ; as the motion-world
Of space-impulsion and of vortices
Might wilder chaoswise, and none to heed
Cosmic fatuity, for all the care
With which upon the pulses of our brain

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

The emanations and the corpuscles
Might beat in vanity. — The vortices
Contain no certainty like this of self.
But God by act miraculous of will
Orders the spirits-animal intervening
To cause infection of the conscious soul
And yield a knowledge where no knowledge is
By any power of the human will.
And thus were soul in this its certainty
Confined unto volition which alone
Is independent of the world-machine
And of the intervened divinity.
Thus were my will alone cause-of-itself
And independent of a God beyond
Who may or may not be *formaliter*
Himself my will without affecting it
Nor causing derogation from the truth
Of certainty immediate. But thought,
In so far as affected by the things
Of motion and emotions of the sense,
Essentially dependeth on the act
Of God, and must upon His truthfulness
Implicit place reliance ; that, sans God,
Were all my doctrines of the vortices —

DESCARTES

Their propagancé of motion self-conserved —
Of mechanism and geometry
(Which seem so pseudo-clear, so false-distinct
At least to cogitation) nothing more
Than postulates, coördinates in God
Of a proof, of a curvature nowise
Intrinsically provable. And world
Remains enigma, save our confidence
In God be perfect beyond skepticism!

And can the soul that once hath known itself
In thought's immediate certainty rest thus
In confidence upon a God unfelt
Whose plausible coincidence of will
Even with mine own might never operate
Otherwise than my certainty of self
Permits unto the will of God-in-me?
Were not the soul, that thus can rise beyond
Dependence and attain indifference toward
The infinite will (such autovital self),
Superior to any confidence
Wherein the right of self-reliance were
Lost and assurance credulously placed
Upon the fiat of an emptiness

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Which no heart-introspection verifies ?
Rather, the true report of skepticism
Be for a credo ; firm denial of God
For faith : acceptance of uncertainty
Be certain, clear, distinct assurance won :
How nought in the world stands proven as we
sense it ;

But all, if any world beyond the soul
Exist, may be deception ! Then at last,
However pitiful and valueless,
Ironical, a mockery might be
The proven data of a motion-world
Conceived as heterousian to thought,
Yet in such world's rejection by our thought
Lurks nothing that may make the soul ashamed,
Nothing wherefrom our certainty may shrink
For fear of lie divine, contingency
For guarantee ; but all is open then
To confidence, reliance in a will
That wipes into a nescience inane
The fabled world of fiat ! That a world
(For some world must be to our questioning)
Based in the inward certainty (for no
World hath survived from self estranged) may rise

DESCARTES

Germane unto the mind that makes of it
Interpretations of the things of sense
Which are of thought's own substance ; and
be seen

By warranty of faith immediate
In world-construction (to our questioning
A fair response) for soul-experience
Of soul, in virtue of the will-of-self
Self-differential ! Then my *Cogito*
Shall bear a meaning of a world-in-me ;
Mine *Ergo sum* involve creation (as
A God) of endless multitudes of souls,
Past and to-come unto the end of time,
Holding in each soul, as within my soul,
By godship, each, all-time's criterion
All-independent of eternity.

Cogito, ergo sum ! — (Gassendi hath
His answer, and I mine) — The vortices
Shall stare amazed upon the Vortex-Soul !

SPINOZA

HOW marvellous that I, the mind minute,
Of personage obscure and humble place,
Benedict, outcast (how that Benedict
Implies the wonder !) at my daily task
Of grinding glasses unto optic aid,
Should share in God and, to my least degree,
In finite represent His attributes
Infinite, grounds of my modality,
Extension both and Thought ; in that I taste
Both bodily and with the spirit-sight
(As body and thought are one within my soul)
Somewhat of His intention absolute —
For order, system, law are God in us —
Gazing athwart these lowlands toward the sea
And sensing God the boundless in their breadth.
Ay, every man and every beast (therein
Descartes was blind and brutal that he placed
Dumb brutes beyond the pale of soul !), in sort
Each herb of the field, if not each smallest grain
Of the sea's shifting sand, yields sight in least
Of that which God is. For in fact and thought
Is He each man, each beast, each herb of the field,

SPINOZA

And every grain of the sea's shifting sand —
The sea unseen, whose murmur, like God's voice
Within the heart, comes on the distant air
Unto my window as I work and muse
Of His infinity, the Far yet Here,
Thought ev'n as Existence. For the great Descartes
Was fair in this : that certainty of self
(And with it, as I hold, of every fact
In anywise resemblant of a self)
Felt in the postulate immediate
(As by analogy applied to all)
Of thought, can rest but in the truth of God
His being as His knowing. But beyond
Descartes was this ; the proof that, an God be
(As God were absolute primal axiom!),
Must all soe'er in somewise be of Him
Parcel and aspect, sharing as of God
In thought and being, spirit-truth or space.
For otherwise were God's infinitude
Hamper'd, determined, and confined (so made
Nought infinite) by merest being of each
(For, e'en though finite, yet must entity
Be relatively theirs in virtue of
Possess'd extension, attribute of being :

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

No mere illusion to our thought that else
Were but deceived by God whose law is truth !) —
Were God confined by very being of each
The least herb of the field, sand of the sea,
Or ear to hear the murmuring far voice
From ocean drifting with the westerwind
Unto my window over the wide lea.
René was right. But on him must I build
The explanation of our dualism,
God's prime assumption of the attributes
Wherein, as substantives by God create
Opposed, Descartes divided yet the world
Nor reunited them, as needs should be,
(Save partially, if God and mind be one ?)
In ultimate essence of the Substance-God.
For God conceived he (as a man might see
Some ocean over beyond a managed land)
For stuff-of-thought somehow intractable,
Incapable of reclamation still ;
Maugre our dunes or dikes of argument
Not germane to the fact of fact-in-space
But sheerly non-extensive ; that there stood,
Over against the solid land of men,
Their goings and their comings practicable

SPINOZA

(Which only as in the brain's pineal gland
Had touch of God or unity with Him !),
The theory of God within the mind :
Final assurance somehow (as the sea
Might seem to bound and be for firmament
Around our continent) of me and mine,
This man and that man and their means and ways ;
But not, save solely for that postulate
Of being through thought's certainty of self,
Accountable for truth's duality
In either instance. For the mind of God
(With *René*, substantive not attribute ;
Opposed to matter and not reconciled
By relative ascription), why should it think
(By indirection through the mind of man
Dreaming the dreams of space unwarrantable !)
The thoughts call'd mind of man ; and why should man
Think thoughts of space-extension, dream of things
Unwarranted by spacelessness of God,
And hence, if anywise themselves a truth,
Of independent fundament ? Whence God
By postulates Cartesian well might seem
A somewhat merely over-against all
We know of land and sea and air alike ;

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

And therefore (lo ! a God remote and lorn
As ocean !) inly over-against us too,
Whose stuff-of-thought (explain'd as God none less !)
Is land and sea and air, herb of the field,
Beast of the pasture, and that distant sound
Which comes like voice out of the infinite
In sooth, whilst but some emanation from
The pulse-beat of the surge upon the sand —
Nought other : though it stir my senses here
And with them all my soul (my soul, but sense
Of world in order of eternity
And therefore God in sort) to speak of God !
Thus take I great Descartes. Were he right wholly
(And then would he be Nature, God not Man !)
Were God yet very near nonentity ;
And nought were referable unto Him
Nor explicable by infinity,
Where His infinity, so false-conceived
As mental substance sans space-attribute,
Were bounded by the substance of our space,
Our world and everything we think therein
So far as built upon the facts of sense !
Nor can Geulincx, with all his fear of God,
Effect a reconciling, where his God

SPINOZA

Must operate on substances opposed,
Mind both and body as occasion calls,
To harmonize ; though neither is of Him
For attribute, and therefore both alike
Determine God as in Jehovah's guise ;
And Descartes' fault is doubled. Nor can they
Of Britain, Bacon, Hobbes, or latest Locke,
By reference of every truth to sense
And thus at last to motion, more than mean
That of a God, an One, they know nor care.
But of the dear dilemma doth a truth
Evolve, how God, if Godlily He be,
Must owe both fundamental attributes,
Not mind alone, far less this world of space
Solely, but both alike, extension and
Thought, if inverse of aspect both yet God's,
Attributes wherein rests modality. —
That further problem of the attributes,
Their prime interrelation, how they be
Wholly obverse and yet of God the same,
Without relation and yet correlate,
That problem leave I to futurity
Building upon me as upon Descartes
I build. My stint of sight goes not so far,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Though sure unto the limit of my reason :
Reason, sufficient by my sharing in
The truth of God, as He is infinite
And finite I, but otherwise one truth.
Nay, and that further contrast ultimate
Of my half-finite, His infinity
(This difficulty of our modalism)
Seemeth itself but marvel, not to be
Wholly explain'd by me the quasi-finite
Who realize, appropriate in mind
But may not sanely solve the mystery
None less for marvel actual assured !
For in the dual attribution springs
The form of truth that yields me share in God ;
And therefore is the marvel possible
That I the bigots' scapegoat, late thrust out
From synagogue and service of my race
And in this humble village set to earn
A meagre livelihood by craft obscure,
May ne'ertheless feel of the infinite
My share for solace and be stuff of God
Both as I sit and see the widespread leas
Of this Low Country and, though fleshly-born,
Am parcel of His plenitude of space,

SPINOZA

And as the murmur of the distant sea
So faintly touching on the ear of sense
Speaks to the spirit and resolves my thought
To ratiocinate of God the Mind,
Thought-universal: that my meagre thoughts
Are also God's: God thereby through me proven,
In virtue even of my finitude,
Nowise determined of my finitude,
But postulating and approving it
In both those ways diverse which great Descartes
Fail'd of ascribing equally to Him.
And thus the ultimate axiom of God,
The substance self-appearing modalwise
As self-diverse, gleams through my daily task
Of grinding glasses unto optic aid
(Fit symbol of a mission unto men!)

Daily discern'd, daily to comfort me
In this affliction, thrust beyond the pale
Of race and old religion. And I plan,
As adequately as my share in Him
May prompt me and permit, to set me forth
The ethical system of the Modal God,
The substance and the attributes portray'd,
The truths of reason and the truths of sense,

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Insight of ordering eternity
To govern, regulate our daily ways
Of passion and affection — all portray'd
By method of the sure geometer
From postulate and axiom, premised in
The truth of this reflection : whilst the sea
Pours to my ear attuned, attentive now
The distant, small yet full sonority
Of mightiness at working : that my work,
Though emanate but from this mind minute,
May with the breadth and fulness of the sea
Have power, and speak to many among men
Of mightiness at working. Great Descartes
Rifted the world in twain — I, Benedict
The poor world-outcast, heal the rift — in God.

KANT

FROM our dogmatic slumbers surely we
Awake, and critically comprehend
The compromise between opposing creeds.
From our dogmatic slumbers we awake !
God, freedom, immortality abide,
An heritage of grace inviolable
In virtue of the comprehension, saved
Unto our personal practice, though at best
Lost from phenomenal sufficiency
Or any knowledge. But the faith remains
Clear'd of confusion with the things of sense,
Space-intuition or the synthesis
Sprung *à posteriori*. Prior to
All understanding, underlying all
Of sensuous reason, gleam intuitive
To pure-imagination (an the term
Mean thought-beyond-conception ?) postulates
Proved innerly ideal, quite beyond
Concatenation with experiable
Truth-presentation. Undiscursively
Sub specie æternitatis spring
The truths beyond space, time, or very judgment :

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Self-given, transcendental : God, the soul ;
And, of the two conjoin'd, freedom of deed
Within will-conscience categorical.
Thus much is sure : no mere analysis
Of inborn intellection e'er might yield
Experience ; no experience by sense,
Save apperceptual, might formulate
Truth-relativity and functioning.
Nor, if our knowledge be, as thus approved,
Wholly experiential, earn'd of sense
For necessary substance apperceived
Within the formal functions space and time,
Might duty, conscience, immortality
Be saved unto the soul, nor God and soul
Experience themselves, unless at last
Over beyond experience remain
The final postulates self-warranted,
Axiomatic, whereof (noumenal
To faith if to our very reason blind)
Are guidance, valuation yielded to
All acts of man, man moralist alone
In virtue of a Duty, absolute,
Unquestionable. We indeed awake
From our dogmatic slumbers ; and are sure

KANT

By warrant of the sane evaluation,
Evaluation applicable alike
To aught sensational or rational,
Hypostatized or formal, save alone
Those postulates exempt, themselves beyond
Concept of form or substance. Save at least
For such exemption, seems the last truth known,
The problem solved. — Might any man do more ?
And in the conscious-won achievement now
I, soul-mature, resign the teaching, take
Leave of my post for leisure whilst I live
To recapitulate to mine own mind
What I have learn'd and taught before all men.
And the truth seems as I above declare,
Displacing dogmatisms hitherto
True seemingly and heretofore believed.

Though, were it not but dogmatism disguised
To rest in any doctrine that would seem
Final truth-satisfaction ? May not truth
(Attainable perchance by criticism,
Yet, as attain'd, formative-critical !)
Itself be process, truth-belief at best
In alterance ever (I would fain believe

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

No man in error where belief is frank
As in this Gottlieb ! I would fain believe
My wisdom unendanger'd by success
Of counter-systems !) that the old give place
To new : as I in leadership must now
Yield to the young-advancing spirit, he
Whom I befriended, yet before the world
Who openly decries my creed, would fain
Substitute for this credence noumenal
Some sense of selfness felt intuitively,
To solve the riddle of antinomies
As I proposed them, relegating form-
And-substance (hitherto my fundament
Of cosmic explanation) to mere phase
Of self-deliverance, self-utterance
Of the absolute inherence, egohood ?
My craft were criticism, judgment o'er
The crabbed dogmatisms of thought and sense —
And so far fairly ! Yet are those dogmatisms
In my critique, as sadly I confess,
Alike regarded as unreconciled
For terms of explanation ultimate
Unless in some third function nowhere found
Save in a faith, pragmatic postulate

KANT

Necessitated lest reason and sense
Alike be vacuous and all truth be lost ;
Faith call'd in compromise to substitute
For non-phenomena unknowable,
For spaceless, timeless soul-nonentity,
For chaos come again, wanting a form.
That I've derived God, immortality,
The human soul from such sheer *tour de force*
Of *unctio in extremis* to my creed
Scarce may discredit this the fresh attempt
Of him who, postulating inwardness,
Egohood for the pure *nooumenon*
(Though how such universal be defined
Unless as I and thou as each is man,
I know not nor might readily conceive !),
Assumes the derivation of a world
By spontaneity, as it would seem,
Although by opposition absolute
From out such selfness. Shall I pale before
The young-ascending star without at worst
Some criticism, comprehensively
Some effort urgent of mine egohood
(Of Egohood within the will of me
Even as a god, and yet God by no means ! —

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

So Johann Gottlieb teacheth me to mouth)
Unspent as yet although eyesight be dim
And hand's strength failing for the record here?
Shall I in dogmatism make descent
Who flourish'd in a dogmatism's fall,
Or use my last of critical acumen,
Of estimate and apperception, toward
Some reconstruction of the falling scheme,
Some alteration of the creed, to crave
Attention from the centuries to-come
Even beyond this Fichte's? For I feel,
In my sad sense of failure before him
Who would reclaim to our experience
Innerly what my teaching hath but proved
No presentation — in my failure feel I
A principle of regenerance, a seed
Perchance of proof will relegate his own
(Which seems indeed strangely to lack some real
Accountability for me and thee
As we are facts of mine experience!)
To obsolescence. Centuries, may be,
Shall heed some fresh tongue that shall plainly speak
What I'd adumbrate with my senile sense
And failing faculties which yet yield not

KANT

Without revolt to triumph such as his
Who was my pupil; for the old demurs
At the new prophet and would none of him,
Save to refute him out of his own mouth,
By full agreement fain outstripping him
To win the laurel in the lists of truth! —
So be it; for this my criticism now
Of mine own creed and system, radical
And fundamental in simplicity:
The egohood of Fichte (which would seem
Wanting in characteristic?), with mine own
Appreciant return upon the truth
Within the truth and constituting it;
Solving perchance the problem of a God-world
Noumenal, self-sustaining as I feel it
In process of world-truth, yet none the less
Experiable and phenomenal,
Formal and characteristic even in each
As each, yet infinite in every soul.
For is not this my soul some infinite
(Not as a world-force surely — but as myself!)
Grasping the truth of Gottlieb, as before
The truths of predecessors, by return
Upon itself ever elaborating

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Unlimited criteria within
(But not beyond ; for nought might be beyond !)
The postulated process ? Therefore, on
To criticism unused, whose verity
Even as some function of my being proves
Capacity within my creed to close
With views unwonted, satisfactory
Unto an intellect that knows itself
In the very process-critical, itself
Highest example of the problem now
To solve by power of the problem's self.

For, on this hint of Fichte, I absolve
Intellect from those limitations (deem'd
Proven as limitations) space and time —
Its own formality. And now declare
Essential formalism (such even as space
And time the universals) for no proof
Of limitation nor of truth beyond
Our powers of apprehension rationally,
Which by their own exhaustion but exhaust
Truth proven concluded of their formalism
And formalist essentially as them.
Though all be given in phenomena

KANT

As an experience interminable,
Yet just such mutualism essential yields
Key to the secret of experience,
Yields resolution to the antinomy
Of such a criticism as mine old creed
Pronouncing its own impotence of proof !
For, lo ! howe'er our sense be constituted
Of universe external, if we be
(As thou or I in estimating truth)
Ourselves the judge of such experience,
Experiencing but in virtue of
This faculty of judgment critical
(As mine old creed fairly establishes),
Then is our truth a figment in itself
(Not representative but original,
Not tentatively but definitive
Unto the soul elaborating it !)
Of its own mastery creative, true
As by processiveness recomplicant
Of the creator-judgment, thine or mine,
Inly assumptive ; and (unless we be
Utterly all-illusive !) infinite
Because interminably determinative
Of its intrinsic mutuality

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Of item unto item constituting
My personality or thine alike
Creative of the world-experience
Nowise identical, yet identically
Appreciant, apperceptive, absolute
For all world's sensuous relativity
And imposition of the counter-self —
Posited counter, scarce by force imposed
Of general conatus not one's own
But, by the identical totality
Of selfness equally inherent to
Mine object-inverse as mine egohood.
And to such self-world scheme were space the
form

Of counter-self supposed indifferent
To alteration; and the form of change
Time, as my consciousness alone hath motion
Cumulant, irretractable, and hence
Essentially processive (whether through
Objective-world or subject), over space
An alterant eternity in each
Moment of implication endlessly.
Where were the need, to such evaluating,
Of any cosmic essence putatively

KANT

(That bugbear thing-itself beyond all ken!)
A non-objective independently
Of formalism in this my space and time?
Where were the need of any egohood
(Call it a soul, God, immortality :
My theory or Fichte's, who may care?)
All undiscursive of an universe ?
What were the want of some imperative
Of conscience nowise presentational,
Bearing no reference to a world of selves
Of equal counter-obligation ? How
Conceive some ultimate antinomy
Of finite-infinite, when, to this new
Presupposition of totality
At self-determination, finitude
Or absolute infinity alike
Were utterly fallacious ; and the truth,
The essence-structure of the system's self,
Were some infinitizing of each fact
By comprehension of the whole in each,
Were some determinism finite-wise,
But none less inferential endlessly
Of the universal, of the unifaction
Of rational appreciation ? Such

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

A faculty of judgment doubtless may
Excuse its operation from the law
Of abstract concept categorical
Or crass modalities of logic-scheme ;
Where every judgment is alike of form
Inceptual, mutualizing (by no mean
Of class-subsumption, no identifying
Of entities distinct but misdefined
By the inclusion indiscriminant),
Mutualizing items whose whole worth
(Whose worth as whole and finally defined)
Lies in their implication each of each
Obversely, by polarity of like
To unlike (by appropriance subjectwise
In contrast to the world-rejectiveness
Of object), reconciled but ne'er confused
In the judgment-deed, the effective alterance
Of self through world, the conscious ethicism
Positing both which otherwise were nought.
Such an inherence of the world in self,
Self in the world establishing its truth
By absolute experience, were perforce
A moralism, an insight of the deed
Determinant interminably through

KANT

All deeds else of a world's infinity,
And hence a conscience and a duty, far
Beyond all law-imposed imperative,
Establishing for law what well may seem
Rule universal — 'Act so that thy deed
'Should be the deed of all.' For thus thy deed
(By my fresh insight of the world-permeation)
Determines universally through all
A novel form and substance unto truth,
Each deed itself creative of a truth
Valid by absolute conformity
Unto the nature of the cosmic scheme,
A scheme created by the comprehension,
The evaluation ultimate express'd
In each world-conscienced act-experience
Of teleology interminable
(For all the empiricism of our sense)
Through space-in-time, of every hour and place
Wherein we move and have our being. For thus
Are space and time no mere restrictive forms
In limitation of the thing-itself,
But, space for world, time for the subject-soul,
Our essence-being and the truth of things
Noumenal as perceptual, sensuous

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

As intellectual; and nought were beside
Of any meaning to an universe
Of individuation, personal
As this of thine and mine! — There, Fichte, thou!
Condemn me out of mine own mouth, if thou
Wouldst to the centuries be more than I!

But, ah! what standard anywhere of truth
Remains, if out of every mouth may mouth
Condemn the truth, as I this Fichte's, he
Mine, as myself erstwhile have disapproved
The dogmatisms heretofore believed?
Where were the settlement of truth-dispute
Fit for the fond old-age of such as me,
To comfort and console for many a doubt
With sense of some real goal to all our search
And standard ultimate for test and proof?
If to the centuries thou wouldst be more
Than I, or I than thou, must there be more
For truth-criterion than this strange-made Self
(Whate'er its restless heart-conatus toward
Unceasing criticism cumulative!)
Which thou hast conjured and my thought hath
won

KANT

Unto pale-gibbering ghostliness, myself
As that false seer whose disembodied earth
Shimmer'd arcanawise within his dreams !
Ah, Gottlieb ! what hast thou not wrought of harm
To sane and serious thinking ; what have I
Not in this hour brought home to mine own creed
Of accusation in enormity ?
Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, none did this ;
Locke, Berkeley, nay — save as a Hume was in them :
And we, as now ! But we are many Humes,
Powerful as our disproofs are powerful
Beyond the shallower skepticism to slay,
Slay and leave nought but orphanage to earth !
Cringe we not both convicted, who forsook
The safe assumption of a Deity
Himself accountable not unto us
Even for the mystery, the antinomy
Of me or thee striving to comprehend
An universe ? Struck not my first fond blow
The shackles from our dogmatisms, to lead
Inevitably to the loss at last
Of all God guaranteed ? My criticism,
My feeling for the soul's formality
And earth's phenomenality, alas !

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Lifted they not the veil, that thou and I
Have enter'd into the temple and are there
Godless, deserted, desolate of hope,
The great destroyers of the Word-Reveal'd,
Thought-stultified and soul-ashamed ? What faith
Without pretence of logic can abide
The very skepticism that left it there
A mockery unto mine own insight
When stirr'd to quick acumen by thy crude
Snatch at the thunder, by thy gross conceit
Of innermost omniscience ? Mine old-age
Hath left earth somewhat desolate ; thy youth
Hath sow'd but dragon-teeth of discontent
At hard-won orphanage ! For surely we
From our safe dogmatisms are wide-awaked :
And the new chaos welters, who knows where ?

MRS. BROWNING

NO, not one word of death ! Though here I die,
These songs I leave thee. And they are my life ! —

Love, who hast given me hope and health and voice,
Making me poet in mine own despite !
Lurk'd there a song of my lips till thy love bid me
Onward and up to lift my heart to thine —
There that thou stoodest sole yet and sublimely
Where no soul's song save mine may dwell with
thee ?

Surely a world of song is wholly thine :
Thine isolate sublimity, no lack
Of a universe to love and call thine own.
Yet, thou wast wont to stoop, to lift it, so !
Till, suddenly, one lift more, and 't is I
Startling my spirit to its fresh-found depths
With peal and pæan who can stand with thee !
'T is the right woman's-work. Where thou art —
well,

Not seraph-spotless as in vaster theme
(Though how this love of mine at least did mend
Thy music to that song of Any Spouse

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Whose spotlessness belies me where I lie !),
Where thou wert passionate yet conscientised still
Of man and woman as a man must be —
There swells the wife-heart ; and the Word is sung !
Shall I accomplish thus Aurora's life
In mine own person, complementing man
With woman's utter passion-purity ?
What though Aurora fail as poet-piece ?
It manifests a mission — made complete
In its own failure by these Sonnet-things.
These, then, my song ; my voice wrung-out by thee,
For thee and through thee unto all mankind —
The love that springs forth naked, unashamed !

Love, how these songs live at the heart of thee !

CARLYLE

I GRIEVE for old bereavement ; long alone
I seek to salve my sore with some new sight,
Mine own gone stale ; I seek to see the world
With eyes of others : as in all those years
Of her companionship I fail'd to find
Hers or to dwell at large within that soul.
Thus much hath been of loss irrevocable,
Wholly inexorable, fix'd withal —
Thus much of her. Let me not quit the world
Without some insight of the younger eyes
To bear upon my grief ; I yet preserving
What wisdom hath been to me beyond theirs :
Not losing God, perhaps gaining the world
In some way yet unguess'd. Let me allow
This loneliest unrest to expatiate
Out of the fulness of some central truth
Ev'n to truth's utmost confines — how, I care not ;
But yield my thought to the flux, all unafraid. —

In darkness or in wisdom struggling, each,
Centre and focus of immensity,
The confluence each of two eternities :

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Each soul some sign of the infinite, of God !
Thus have I spoken ; and shall stand by that ;
Against their cant of atheism, secure :
The fulness of the central truth withal !
And what though this be pantheism : if true ?
What though I risk mine individual self
(And with that self all hope of after-death !) —
As their taunt goes — if God alone in truth
Be the truth, and there be no self beside ?
And more : how lose a self if in some sense
(No matter how, so long as truth it be)
That self be infinite and find in God
A loftier truth that yet is self the same ?
I have decried this truth when logic-woven
Of empty metaphysic subtlety
Without firm faith-foundation ; I have mock'd
The misty opium-dreamer ; scoff'd at him
My first disciple from beyond the sea —
While ever haughtily refusing help
Proffer'd of physic-fact's stolidity.
But now am come, fronting the physic-fact,
Fearless to grapple with it, reconstruct
That slough utilitarian to truth,
If may be, builded of mine Emerson

CARLYLE

His unforgotten Godhood of the soul !
I have examined soul and find it so ;
Seem to myself assured of self-in-God.
A thought to stand-by, utterly sincere.

But why asseverate, asseverate,
If nought be to gainsay within the soul ?
If all the conscious cant, hypocrisy
Be wholly theirs, be none at all of mine,
Why vehement, why objurgatory so
Through all these years of mine accomplishment,
With irritation of internal fret
And mental pain, as though some lurking rift
'Twixt fact and faith tortured the frenzied brain ?
Why is it that the question hath recurr'd
To the same condemnation hour by hour —
Ever the same — if there be not a doubt ;
If detail of the faith (ay, whether worth
Faith, fit to be believed !) never demands
A re-adjudication, if to stay
Still genuinely, vitally sincere ?
The detail of my faith hath varied much —
Half Calvin I, half Fichte ! — still sincere ?
Am I alone 'infallible' of men

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

(Incapable, that, of falsity to self),
Whilst doom'd within me to deny as 't were
Myself, denying what I yet feel fact-like :
Ignoring this their 'evidence of fact '
Which so gets hold of me, for all my cry ;
Which holding me compels me that I cry ?
How may there be that everlasting Yea
I prate of, an there be no Nay as real
As in mine adolescence I too knew ?
Were not my Yea of the soul just Fichte's Self,
My Calvinism alway so bemock'd,
Save something of denial by a world
Be the world and give God a meaning still ?
What if the evidence of fact hath truth
And earth, as earth, be godless as they claim it ?
Shall that destroy me ? Shall idealism
Die vehement deploring phantoms lost ?
Stay, put this case, that earth lies as they say
Barren, and God a gas, and heaven a void,
And soul some tubercle ! Shall I have fear
That God and soul cannot by ev'n these false-truths
Triumph and turn them but to truth the more ?
'T were worst hypocrisy, self-sham and cant
Longer to laugh their evidence to scorn

CARLYLE

As hitherto. At least their full belief
(Mistaken, certainly ?) is yet some fact
For me to face. A world, of many men
Half-one with God, believes there is no God :
Within God's scheme there proves a place for such.
Within my rede (as I am phase of God)
Must prove the same place, proved as it shall please
God to give value. — May earth be as godless ;
And God yet of me and my faith be His ?
A search for truth then, utterly sincere ! —

And why so long postponed I to old-age
This search for truth, if utterly truth-single
At soul in my life's labor as I deem'd
Of prophet, truth-seeker ? May it not be
Perchance some love toward what most apeth truth
(But is not save the self be very God
And very worldless as by Berkeley's scheme),
Zeal for conviction, worst unconscious-cant,
Sincere-hypocrisy (subtlest demerit
Of Satan's panoply !) that hath subdued me ?
I doubt, then, that I truly have loved truth
Despite much protestation. I have loved
Sincerity, pre-requisite soul of truth

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

But not truth's body, forgetful that men's faith
Is measured also by the emblem of it
(The Not-Self of that Fichte, and the 'form
'Of pure perception' in the slang of Kant,
Determinate-momenta of that Hegel,
As the babble goes!) — sole warrant of the mind
Contra mistake, crass insufficiency,
Error against the laws of world-in-God.
Granted God doth allow of varying merit,
The less or more of truthful worth attain'd,
The achievement characteristic and unique,
The stint of sight — each heart may be sincere
In force of sheer belief and yet unworthy.
(How self may be so — that is for research
Of some far future soul, the final problem
Of all soul's exercise in search of truth —
The logic-law of error — I may not seek it!)
What, thus, were the honest fool but fool-sincere,
A fact of nature scantily valuable
In furtherance of truth? And I have praised him
Through mine intemperance of outcry 'gainst
Mere sham. I doubt me if a man may well
(Even myself despite this hour's first fear!)
Unto himself (the last appeal?) be sham;

CARLYLE

But deem him mainly earnestness at heart
In genuine effort to delude the world
At worst, at best not to delude himself ;
Even I at worst, ah, to myself sincere !
I had been thus far sham-like, fool-sincere,
Incapable of answering with truth
Unto their false-truth wherewith they deny
God, immortality, that I approved
Nigh any ignorance if but confident
(Mine own admitted ignorance this day
Of immortality, the lesson of it
Illustrative as of some Fichtean scheme,
Some Hegel's subtlety beyond mere dreams
Of Emerson, of Coleridge and his crew,
Found in the facts these modern men mistake —
These Darwins, Huxleys, Spencers, and the rest —
For counterproof, and I till now ignored !),
Nigh any brutal, raw effrontery —
Of Friedrich, almost of Danton, Marat —
Of mind or manners if with courage of
Its brutishness ; and could not by my test
Of practical conquest over force opposed
(The right of might, due to might's truculence :
The might of right not being competitive !)

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

Have logically long discountenanced
The physic-cohort. (It was but my Ruskin
That warranted the counterclaim of ' power
' By virtue of more complex understanding '
And spiritual conclusion.) I felt free
With arrogance of Calvinistic zeal,
While yet confessing doctrines of God's ways
With men which made men each some Absolute,
To spurn contemptuous a fund of fact
Rich to interpret continuity
Within each individual self as source
Of both eternities, rich to prove soul
By metabolic impetus of will
Ever evolving, rich for detail'd proof
Of the ways of God-in-man which are the Hero
And are my heart's religion. I thus forgetful
How truth is half a doubt, half a dismay
At that which truth's new being oversets
(The God *ex machina* of Calvin in me !),
The truth and thing outworn : because the o'er-
setting
Destroys still truth and is that brutal fact
Which very truth is not. Whence must a love
For truth be sadness half, half-insincere

CARLYLE

And saved thereby from being tyranny !
God is not 'in His heaven' (yon Browning sings it
For all his tragic musings !) save the soul
Of man, regretful of Elysium lost,
Be heaven — and how be heaven save as this earth
Is freedom and omniscience, absolute power
Unto each man whose insight of men all
Yieldeth accommodation, compromise
In practice, as by infinite interplay
Of conscience — Fichte given body and hands
By this despised (and rightly despicable
In its own sordid dust-analysis)
Material hypothesis — reborn
As inward force, infinity of power
In self-conatus — dream'd by mere Lamarck !
Whence must belief in immortality
By soul's new proof derived out of the earth
(Earth's continuity of constant change
Precluding alteration beyond felt
Identity of self within self's span)
Be half a sadness for the faith outworn
Of personal persistence after death —
This personal infinity, once proven,
Of each least conscious spirit in so far

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

As conscientious of the facts of soul
About him — coextensive with his truth —
Debarring any aftermath of death ;
And leaving sad, regretful this belief
In earth-borne godhood for the loss at best
Of heaven-and-hell and God's machinery
Of retribution or unending bliss.
The retribution, bliss without an end,
Are heroism as I feel it in me,
The comprehensive rule of faith in self
Avowing rights of self within all else
As source of mutual duties. Truth is such.

I clearly have inveigh'd (beyond best wont
Of world's great truth-seekers) against untruth,
And have been thus untrue unto myself
In the sole way man may be thus untrue :
Incapable of assimilating much
Which dreary atheism (saved, re-born
In the Teuton's mystery) now turns to mean.
Could I but greatly retransform in me
The false which yet in other minds or times
Is as the truth (these doctrines, let us say,
Of transmutation, teaching the loftier scheme

CARLYLE

Of continuity as self-defining
The conscious soul coterminous with all,
Hence infinite !) I less had been sincere-like,
May be, (well might I wax wiser by that !)
But truthful more unto the universe
Of men within me each of whom speaks truth
And acts it as is in him : truthful most
Unto divinity that each man is —
Each comprehensive of the selves of all.
Thus had I truliest been historian,
As poet, not fantastic chronicler,
By artistry (as one may some day tell
My history !), each puppet speaking forth
Reflective estimate of his own acts
In terms of my best insight of acts all,
Rather than act (as writ) a narrative
Held up to censure by my private creed —
He unenlighten'd in his own estate.
(I ponder that and find that it is so.)
Then had I seen that action least is finite,
Most focus of the eternal by most conscience,
Most gradual wisdom, than by that brute-born
haste
Of swift decision bred of ignorance

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

As was the crass way of the cross'd of old,
As is the way now of the tyrannous,
The self-assertive, not the self-contain'd !
Then had I offer'd less a wail of protest,
More the benign construction Goethe knew
As god unto his spiritual realm ;
More worshipping the truth intrinsically
(And therefore worshipful as no mere hero),
However overthrown and crush'd by force
Of crude sincerity ; and therefore more
As great men are, fostering not deriding
The weaker cause : myself a power among them,
Chief optimist, upbuilder, constituter
In spite of great, wise grief over things lost
Which each fresh proof destroys. I have seen
truth

Destroy'd and new truth ever self-destroy'd ;
Have felt and made men feel the tragedy ;
But ever as by that prevalence of might
Irrational, for right no substitute
Save by some stultification, by some juggle
Of phrase to take the fact for proof of law
(Withal mistaking the real moral-fact) ;
Thus ever as dull protester (irony,

CARLYLE

The tongue of impotent discontent !) perceiving
Not that best protest comes by best constructing
Advanceward of the times, not turning back.
It may be that the meaning of the times
Brings a belief in just this way achieved now
(Despite the lawless Law of Darwin's creed)
Of individual initiative
(Not tyrannous dominance by force sincere ;
Not purpose of some mob beyond the man !)
Proven by comprehension, soul-conclusion
Ensuant on the shown necessity
Of each in every mutual influence.
It may be that the petty point-by-point
Of all their science (those benumbing norms —
False metaphor for Mill's, for Spencer's dreams
Of metaphysic systems self-disguised
And therefore feebler, foolisher than most —
Belittling man's best effort, every sweep
And lift of an heart their theory denies)
Opens, as now I find, a splendor-proof
Of hyper-heroism, divinity,
In this world-constitution, within each
Its definition, miscall'd consequence.
I'll not inveigh against pettiest proofs

POEMS OF PERSONALITY

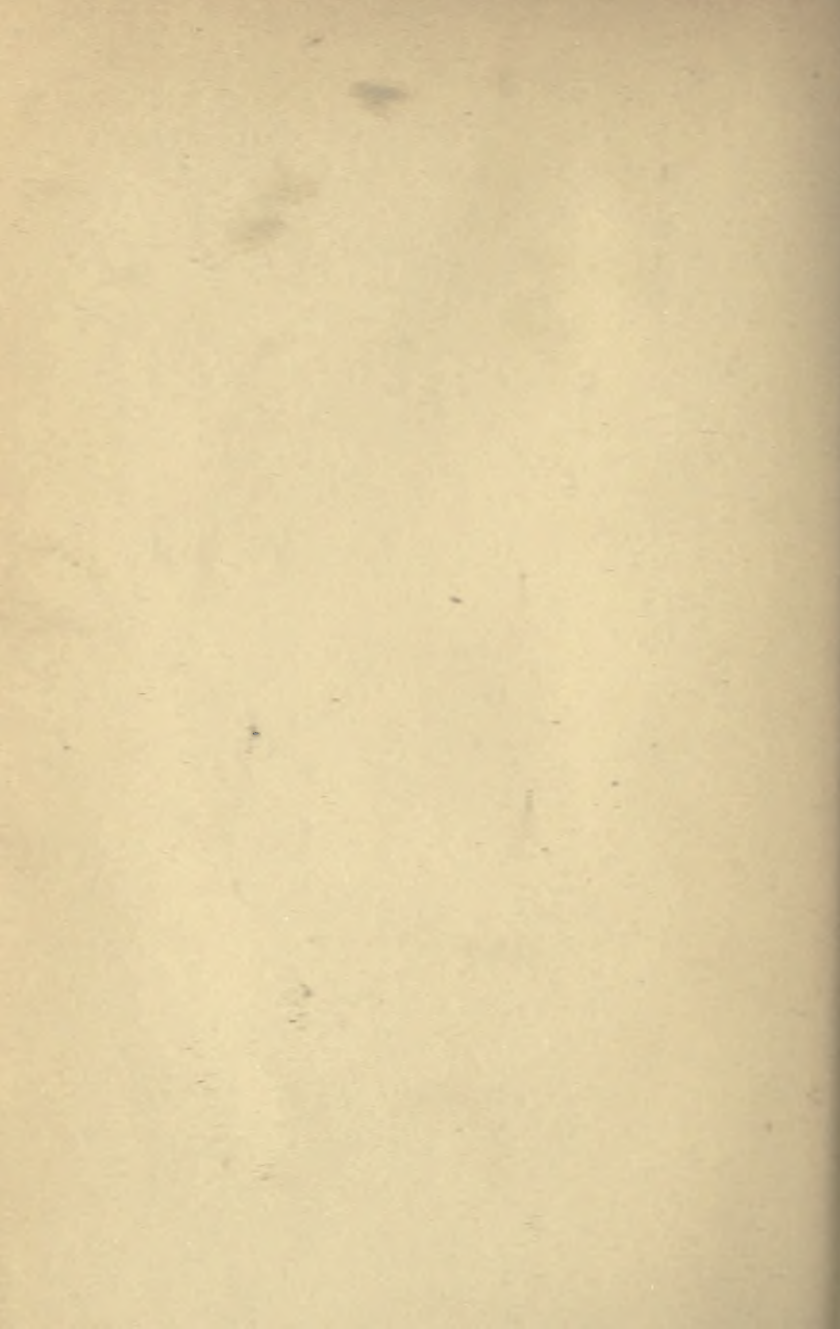
(I catch me in contempt nevertheless,
Maugre this hour's avow'd catholicism !)
Of utilization in the general scheme
(I leave those sand-wastes to the Bentham-brood);
But show the standard of utility
(Synthetic source of value by insight
Through sympathy, not competition with
Desires and satisfactions of all men)
Mainly this personal perception of
Evaluation within every man —
Not within all alike, but within each
In sort by terms yet individualwise
Distinctive, not less infinite thereby,
Because, respective in their private kind
And grade, conclusive. Something of this at heart
I spake of several in whose half-success
I found some warrant of divinity
(Mahomet, Dante, Luther, and of him
Misjudged by name of Cromwell) — them I loved
And felt at one, contributors to use
Upbuilt within my soul as theirs in furth'rance
Of 'God's will': rather, of that sympathy
Which clothes increasingly our passion-frame
With moderation as a garment, pity

CARLYLE

And acquiescence unto other wills,
By knowledge of their faith soul-absolute
Conforming self unto its world of selves ;
Each in its lonely sort a world by insight !

Then to the recognition, reconstruction ;
To find it very helpful at the last
Unto the old man ruthlessly bereaved :
Their crazed material hypothesis —
Toward God-in-the-world (not merely by example
Through history, but) by continuity,
By self-necessitation of world-knowledge
Truth-cumulative in the temporal stream
Enveloping, involving 'to the end' :
By worldhood-needed such a knowledge shown
Focus of both eternities ; some sign
Of life immortal in and of itself
As each is self — though all the world shall pass.

Ah me ! but the bereavement : I alone !



ERRATA

POEMS OF PERSONALITY (FIRST SERIES)

1st, 2nd, and 3rd editions —

Page 82, line 12 }
and } for *Gizeb* read *Gaza*.
Page 88, line 3 }

1st and 2nd editions only —

Page 116, line 8 — for *the* read *in*.

1st edition only —

Page 80, line 1 — for *relea* read *release*.

